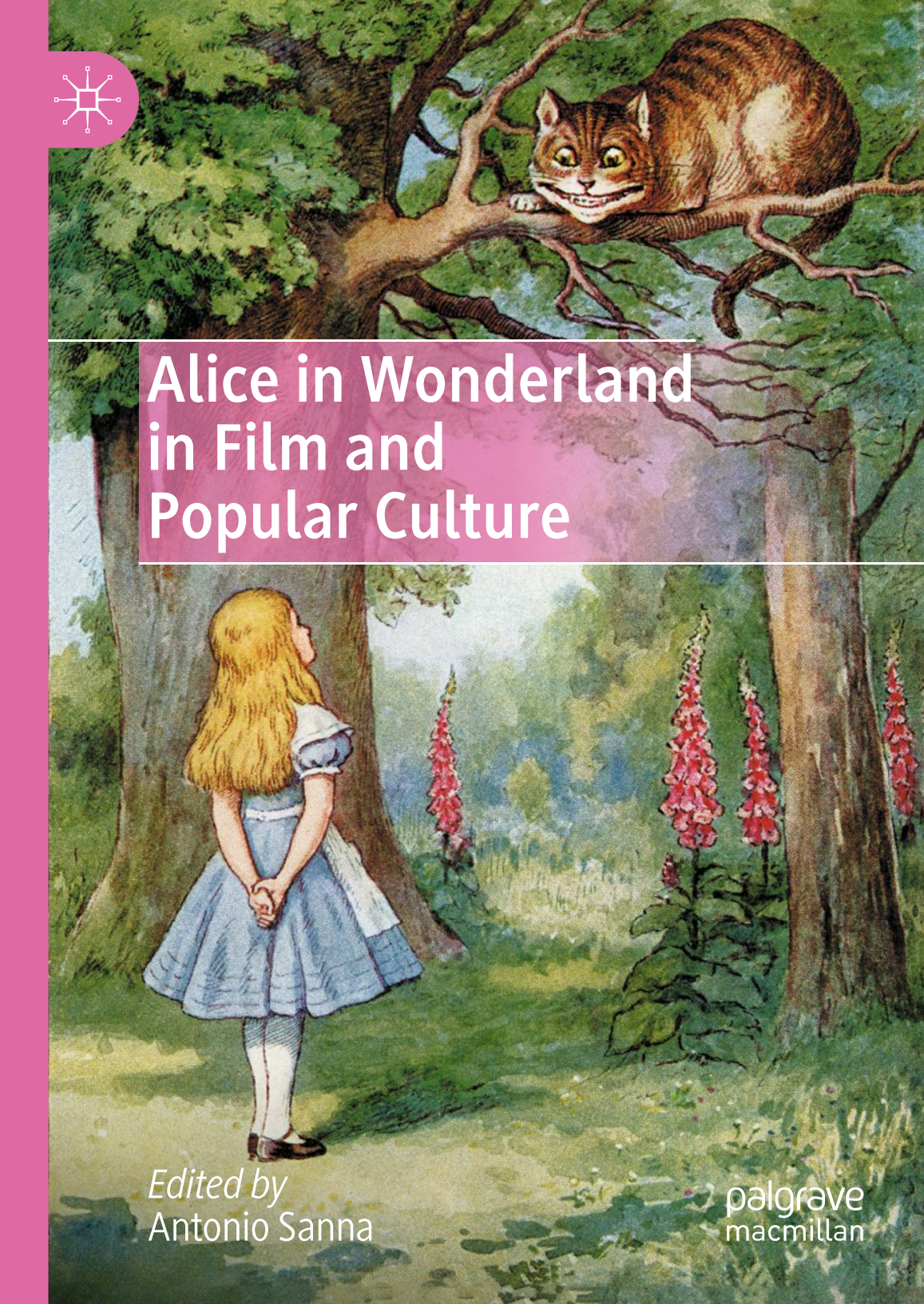




Alice in Wonderland in Film and Popular Culture

Edited by
Antonio Sanna

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Università degli Studi di Sassari
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*To the young ones—Angelica Pittalis, Edoardo Pinna, Marta Cabras,
Miriana Sanna, Riccardo Polo, and Sharon Fadda—may you enjoy such a
jovial spirit your whole life and always cheer up the people around you as
you do with me.*

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CHAPTER 1

Introduction: Alice and the Critics

Antonio Sanna

During the past century and a half the Alice books have been widely discussed by the academic community, which has attempted to eviscerate the multiple meanings of the texts, none of the critics claiming nevertheless the final word on Carroll's works. The readings of the texts have therefore been extremely variegated, starting with biographical studies of Carroll's life as it transpires through the books, from Reverend Dodgson's expedition on the river with the three daughters of the Dean of Christ Church (Lorina Charlotte, Alice, and Edith Liddell) during the 'golden afternoon' when the first, oral version of the story was created, to the details of his life emerging from the works. Several critics have examined the texts in order to find the people Carroll knew and came into contact with during his life—as is the case of Jo Elwyn Jones and Francis Gladstone's *The Red King's Dream or Lewis Carroll in Wonderland* (1995), which brilliantly traces the characters in the tales back to public personas such as Prime Ministers William Gladstone and Benjamin Disraeli, Poet Laureate Lord

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Alfred Tennyson, Pre-Raphaelite painter John Everett Millais, scientist Thomas Henry Huxley, and Bishop Samuel Wilberforce.

An extensive part of the biographical research on Carroll's life has also been devoted to his renowned affection toward young girls, Alice Liddell having been only his first muse in a series of children aged between eight and eleven (though he generally disliked little boys as grubby and noisy [see Auden 1974, 38]).¹ This has led to an intense, lively debate dividing critics and journalists between those who accuse him of a pedophilic, or at least morbid, interest in young girls—due also to his decision to capture the 'innocent unselfconsciousness of children for posterity by photographing them nude' (Douglas-Fairhurst 2015, 252)—and those who strongly oppose such a view.² Critics belonging to the first group include Morton N. Cohen (1995), Michael Bakewell (1997), and Donald Thomas (1996),³ whereas among those who read such relationships as based uniquely upon innocence and sincere friendship are A.M.E. Goldschmidt (1974), Paul Schilder (1974), and Karoline Leach (2015).⁴ Such readings of the writer's life have in turn influenced the interpretations of the literary texts

¹ As Jones and Gladstone note, 'Carroll matured as a tireless finder and loser of child-friends' (1995, 198).

² Douglas-Fairhurst specifies: 'Whereas a modern viewer might see nakedness, Carroll saw nudity. [...] in each case [of the photographs] Carroll's true motivations remain a troubling blank' (2016, 256).

³ Shari L. Savage (2018) indicates that no evidence has ever been provided that Carroll acted on his alleged erotic urges towards young girls, even by those scholars that believe that he was actually a pedophile.

⁴ A third argument is suggested by Douglas-Fairhurst when he reports that 'a number of Carroll's contemporaries thought that his sexual interests, however pale and repressed, were more likely to have been focused on other men,' though he later specifies: 'Yet it is just as likely that Carroll's feelings were as much of a mystery to him as they are to us' (2006, 138).

(and, of course their adaptations)⁵ as either ‘coded expression of abnormal desire’ (Brooker 2004, xvi) or frivolous, joyous nonsense.

Alongside these readings, many critics have focused on Carroll’s allusions to the cultural, scientific, and social milieu of his age. Prominent among these are the studies of the texts that examine the references to Darwinism (William Empson in 1935 and Jan B. Gordon in 1971), controversial religious disputes (Shane Leslie in 1933), imperialism (Amanda L. Brian in 2013), mathematical concepts (Gillian Beer in 2016), and vivisection (Anna Kérchy in 2018). Other interpretations have considered Carroll’s books as an illustration of different philosophical theories, from Bertrand Russell’s 1942 analysis of perception and existence through the Red King’s dream and Roger W. Holmes’ 1959 interpretation of Humpty Dumpty as a realist to Gilles Deleuze’s theorization of the paradoxical concept of becoming through Alice’s changes in stature (in *The Logic of Sense*, 1969), and Richard Brian Davis’ edited collection *Alice in Wonderland and Philosophy* (Wiley, 2010).

Many critical readings examine the texts’ educational and pedagogical aspects. Such studies focus on the relationship between Alice and the adult characters surrounding her (Agarwal et al. 2012) as well as on the role of children in the Victorian age (Nina Auerbach 1973; Christine Roth 2009;

⁵ Noteworthy are those films that include Lewis Carroll in their narratives. These are: the French production *Alice in Wonderland* (1949), which is the first color adaptation of the books, in which events in Dodgson’s and the three Liddell sisters’ lives at Oxford are read as the inspiration for the telling of the story on the expedition on the river. Actors and actresses performing in the Oxford scenes lend their voices to the stop-and-motion animated characters in Wonderland, thus reproducing a doubling of their parts typical of fantasy films such as *The Wizard of Oz* (1939). The expedition on the river takes central importance in Dennis Potter’s TV film (1965), in which the stuttering and introverted reverend’s real life, his relationship with Alice Liddell, and the history of the book’s publication are alternated with the scenes taken from the books, as well as in the 1972 adaptation directed by William Sterling and the 1986 BBC version. The expedition on the river is also depicted in the theme of the Anglia Television five-episode series (1985) and in *Dreamchild* (1985). In the latter film, an elderly Alice Liddell Heargraves visits New York in 1932 to celebrate Carroll’s centenary and to receive an honorary degree from Columbia University. On the occasion she remembers through flashbacks events involving her and Carroll as well as she fantasizes about some portions of Carroll’s stories in which her young self acts as the fictional Alice. By offering an interpretation of Carroll and his relationship with Alice Liddell these films thus allude to the critical interpretations on the writer’s life.

Naomi Wood 2012).⁶ Critics such as W.H. Auden (1974) emphasize the contrast between the ‘invariably reasonable, self-controlled, and polite’ heroine and the ‘unsocial eccentrics [whether human or animal]—at the mercy of their passions and extremely bad-mannered’ (1974, 35) that she encounters during her adventures.⁷ Indeed, both in Wonderland and the world through the looking glass the young protagonist moves through an anarchic environment that she needs to order out. As it happens to many children, the innocent and conscientious Alice attempts to make sense of the commands and prohibitions set out by the adults, and the laws binding them. She confronts a world that is ‘fantastic, insane, sometimes even terrible; a world that, as in a game of mirrors, is turned inside out, reversed, comical and frightening at the same time’ (Meloni 1990, 11).⁸ Some critics also focus on the parallels between Alice’s changes in stature and a child’s growth as well as on the frequent indications about eating and drinking. Issues of identity have been often traced in the texts as due to the fact that many characters ask Alice who she is or invite her to remember it, thus producing in her an identity crisis⁹ and feelings of alienation from her body and her mind. On the other hand, the progressive acquisition of confidence and assertiveness on the protagonist’s part has been interpreted as a representation of the growth of children and their social, psychological, and emotional development (Lloyd 2010, 9).¹⁰

Many interpretations of the books—such as those by Robert Sutherland in 1970, Francis Huxley in 1976, Winfried Nöth in 1994, James

⁶ Apoorv Agarwal et al.’s “Social Network Analysis of *Alice in Wonderland*” (2012) uses an annotation scheme for a dynamic network analysis of Carroll’s text created by the interactions between (and observation of) the characters as social events, focusing specifically on the characters of Alice, the White Rabbit, and the Mouse.

⁷ As Elsie Leach brilliantly summarizes, the characters in Wonderland ‘snap at her [Alice], preach to her, confuse her, or ignore her. They behave to her as adults behave to a child—they are peremptory and patronizing [and exhibit a] ponderous didacticism, and contradictory behavior’ (1974, 125).

⁸ My translation. Charles Taliaferro and Elizabeth Olson argue that Wonderland is an amusing rather than horrifying world, ‘because of Alice’s sensibility, all the situations, characters, and commands are exposed as ludicrous and absurd. [...] Alice is sensible, rational, and grounded. She does not panic or even truly lament her predicament’ (2010, 189).

⁹ As Donald Rackin argues, ‘Not only is Alice’s previous identity meaningless in Wonderland; the very concept of permanent identity is invalid’ (1974, 458).

¹⁰ Kathleen Blake (1974) has read the character of Alice through the pedagogical theories elaborated by Jean Piaget, arguing that the seven-year-old child represents the third period of the psychologist’s development model, which signals the appropriate use of logic on the part of the child and his/her attempt to entertain more complex social interactions.

A. Williams in 2012, and Gillian Beer in 2016—have examined their linguistic and logical aspects and have attempted to penetrate Carroll’s nonsensical language. The latter is a ludic genre that targeted Victorian ‘common sense’ by using different logical mechanisms of language that unsettle the meaning of words and their relationships with the signifiers, while simultaneously producing an effect of irony. Under scrutiny have therefore been the many riddles and jokes populating the texts and the literalization of puns as much as the elision of the expected meanings, the dissolution of cause and effect, ‘the random juxtaposition or decisively arbitrary of sense and sound’ (Meloni 1990, 66), the homophonic ambiguities, graphic homonyms, and parodies of contemporary songs, nursery rhymes, and poems.¹¹

Other critical readings have focused on the dreamy aspects of the story and its psychoanalytical implications. Both the Alice books indeed reveal in the final chapters that the young protagonist’s adventures have been dreams. In 1933 A.M.E. Goldschmidt evidenced the sexual symbolism of the stories, Paul Schilder in 1938 and Géza Róheim in 1955 explored the issues of oral trauma and aggression, whereas (in *The Logic of Sense*) Gilles Deleuze considered Alice as simultaneously sexualized and desexualized (and thus both confirming and reversing the Oedipal complex). More recent studies (Hart Christopher Lane in 2011 and Angela Hart in 2015) have examined the parallels between Carroll’s use of nonsensical language and the theories elaborated by French psychoanalyst Jacques Lacan, who himself compared the stories to the works of Jean Piaget in 1964–65.

Since the 1960s several critics and readers have interpreted Alice’s journey as an allegory for an intense drug experience, as a story ‘inspired by, a celebration of, or a guide to hallucinogenic drugs’ (Parker 2010, 138). Critics such as Thomas Fensch (1974) and Scott F. Parker (2010) have evidenced the presence in Carroll’s texts of some allusions to the consumption of drugs (the Caterpillar smokes a hookah; Alice eats mushrooms and drinks mysterious beverages that alter her perception of reality).¹² The depiction of Wonderland has therefore been compared to the hallucinogenic state of people who make use of drugs and such an

¹¹ According to Douglas-Fairhurst, ‘Alice’s adventures are a celebration of language—its pleasures, anxieties, rewards, risks’ (2006, 147).

¹² Parker himself contradicts such an interpretation of the texts by arguing that Alice experiences the reality of Wonderland as absurd and distorted before she takes any alleged drugs (2010, 138).

association has been established in popular culture through the ascription of the slang term ‘alice’ to LSD and through songs, starting with Jefferson Airplane’s ‘White Rabbit’ and the Beatles’ ‘Lucy in the Sky with Diamond’ (both 1967).¹³

Many contemporary books on the adaptation and re-mediation of Carroll’s texts in film and popular culture generally focus on a single aspect or medium of the adaptation. Volumes such as Catherine Nichols’ *Alice’s Wonderland: A Visual Journey through Lewis Carroll’s Mad, Mad World* (2014) and *Illustrating Alice* by Marina Vaizey et al. (2013), for example, examine the evolution of the illustrations accompanying the literary texts. Catherine J. Golden’s *Serials to Graphic Novels: The Evolution of the Victorian Illustrated Book* (2017) focuses on the evolution of the illustrations in Victorian books until present-age graphic novels, but only a portion of it is dedicated to the illustrations of Carroll’s texts. Such volumes do not contain any academic discussion on the subject apart from brief summaries of it.

¹³ Songs referring to Carroll’s works abound and include: Chick Corea’s entire album *The Mad Hatter* (1978), Chary Garcia’s ‘Alicia en el Pais’ (1980), Annihilator’s ‘Allison Hell’ (1989), Symphony X’s ‘Through the Looking-Glass’ (1998), Forever Slave’s ‘Alice’s Inferno’ (2005), Hypnogaja’s ‘Looking Glass’ (2005), Lisa Mitchell’s ‘Sometimes I Feel Like Alice’ (2007), Buck Tick’s ‘Alice in Wonder Underground’ (2007), Natalia Kills’ ‘Wonderland’ (2010), Avril Lavigne’s ‘Alice’ (2010), Monkey Majik’s ‘Wonderland’ (2011), Egypt Central’s ‘White Rabbit’ (2011), Panic! At the Disco and Fun’s ‘C’Mon’ (2011), AKB48’s ‘First Rabbit’ (2012). Several artists have specifically focused on the poem ‘Jabberwocky’ in their songs, referring to it in their lyrics or performing a recited version of it. Among these, Boeing Duveen and The Beautiful Soup’s ‘Jabberwock’ (1968), Ambrosia’s ‘Mama Frog’ (1975), Verkraum’s ‘Beware the Jabberwock’ (2008), and Hatcham Social’s ‘Jabberwocky’ (2009). On the other hand, Carroll’s texts have also inspired orchestral works, operas and ballets, starting with Dick Cotsford’s *In Wonderland: Six Duets for the Pianoforte* (1876), Deems Taylor’s suite *Through the Looking-Glass* (1918), and Irving Fine’s *Three Choruses from Alice in Wonderland* (1942) to David Del Tredici’s symphonies (1969–85), the operas by Unsuk Chin (2007) and Alan John (2008) as well as the ballets by John Craton (2010) and Joseph Hallman (2010).

Similarly, at least one chapter is devoted to the 1951 film¹⁴ in the books on Disney's productions, including Zach Zypes' *The Enchanted Screen: The Unknown History of Fairy-Tale Films* (2011), *Diversity in Disney Films: Critical Essays on Race, Ethnicity, Gender, Sexuality and Disability*, edited by Johnson Cheu (2013), and *It's the Disney Version! Popular Cinema and Literary Classics*, edited by Douglas Brode and Shea T. Brode (2016), whereas the books on director Tim Burton published after 2010—such as *The Philosophy of Tim Burton* (edited by Jennifer L. McMahon 2014) and *A Critical Companion to Tim Burton* (edited by Adam Barkman and Antonio Sanna 2017)—examine the American director's version of Carroll's stories.¹⁵

Among the books that focus on the re-interpretation of the literary figure of Alice in other media and the evolution of Carroll's texts into popular culture are included: Zoe Jaques and Eugene Giddens' *Lewis Carroll's Alice's Adventures in Wonderland and Through the Looking Glass: A Publishing History* (2013), on the differences between the various printed editions of the text and, only in the last chapter, between them and

¹⁴The 1951 Disney adaptation, which mixes characters and events from both the 1865 and 1871 books, is notable for its transformation of many objects and animals (such as the teapots) into surreal projections as well as for the final chase sequence inspired by Dali's works. Disney's version has been however criticized for its 'cheaply pretty,' over-sugared songs and for being too episodic and stylistically inconsistent (Boslaugh 2016, 53 and 55). On the other hand, as Will Brooker has noted, Disney's film fixed 'Alice's image as cultural icon' (2004, 200). The 1951 film is the first to introduce the scene of the Pigeon, but there are several sequences that are completely original to it, such as the protagonist's wish to live in an ideal world where things work on the contrary, the golden doorknob, and Alice getting lost in the Tulgey wood while attempting to return home. Also, in Disney's film there is a major emphasis on the danger (especially, of beheading) that Alice is threatened with during the story.

¹⁵The 2010 *Alice in Wonderland* directed by Tim Burton is structured as a sequel to the original story, Alice being a nineteen-year-old girl who returns to the realm (actually called 'Underland') and liberates its inhabitants from the tyrannical yoke of the hydrocephalic, 'castrating' Red Queen (who suffers from her own deformity). This is an unwelcoming, nightmarish version of the fantasy world created by Carroll, which is characterized by 'gloomy landscapes and allusions to the Darwinian concept of the struggle for existence' and emphasizes the post-traumatic stress of many characters (Sanna 2017, 78). Alice is kind, resourceful, and brave, but the film also emphasizes her nonconformity to societal norms of femininity and female behavior by presenting her as a freethinking agent who must accept her role as a strong female lead and finally reject a life of domestic constraints. The film exemplifies Burton's fondness for absurdity and the bizarre in the use of nonsensical language and whimsical characters as well as it epitomizes the director's visual style in the representation of both psychedelic, gracious landscapes and waste, joyless lands.

their adaptations in other media; and Laura Helen Marks' *Alice in Pornoland: Hardcore Encounters with the Victorian Gothic* (2018), whose third chapter examines the contemporary pornographic adaptations of Carroll's books that recast the protagonist as a sexual active agent. The aforementioned books, however, do not examine in detail the novels, graphic novels, films, and videogames studied in this volume.

Will Brooker's *Alice's Adventures: Lewis Carroll in Popular Culture* (2004) traces the development of Carroll's books into several media (including toys, theme parks, and heritage sites). Brooker examines a wide range of texts, from Carroll's diaries and several literary adaptations of the Alice stories and their illustrators to cinematic and TV adaptations,¹⁶ videogames, and the work of the Lewis Carroll Society. Postmodern, contemporary texts such as Neil Gaiman's *Coraline* (2002), films such as Terry Gilliam's *Tideland* (2005), the TV series *Once Upon a Time in Wonderland* (2013–14), and the 2011 Scottish Ballet *Alice* are the focus of Anna Kérchy's *Alice in Transmedia Wonderland* (2016), which examines 'how media change elicits different modes of enchantment, disenchantment and reenchantment in metafantasies commenting on the limits

¹⁶Brooker's volume examines in details two of the most renowned cinematic adaptations of Carroll's novels, Jonathan Miller's 1966 *Alice in Wonderland* and Jan Svankmajer's *Alice* (1988). The former, a slow-paced film with no real vivacity and a mesmerizing soundtrack, is set in a series of apparently abandoned buildings, such as a hospital, a church, a manor and some country houses and the countryside, where the young protagonist (whose voiceover supplants much of the original dialogues) meets several people representing Carroll's characters. There are no animals in this production, only extravagant and bizarre individuals in Victorian costumes, who represent Alice's encounter with an adult world. The human actors' and actresses' wild and irrational behavior seems to define the locations more properly as a madhouse. More disquieting is the fact that Alice rarely looks at the other characters, but rather stares blankly straight ahead with an absent expression. In Svankmajer's film, it is Alice herself who tells the story, addressing spectators directly and reciting all of the characters' lines. Wonderland is depicted as a decrepit building and its creatures (stuffed animals and their skeletons, often hybridized with miniature objects, wooden dolls, and a pack of cards) and objects move by means of the stop-motion technique. The latter further contributes to the feeling of anxiety and the uncanny generated by this film's images, which linger on discomforting details (the close-ups on dirt and the food residues mixed with nails and pins) as well as on menacing themes (Alice becomes a doll after eating tarts and drinking ink, and she is often chased by the creatures or hurts herself during her adventure), and are accompanied only by raw sound effects. According to Brooker, Svankmajer creates a series of repeated motifs (such as Alice's many struggles to open school desks and the White Rabbit's greediness for sawdust) that emphasize some of the original books' themes, including sadism, eating, and mathematical puzzles (2004, 216).

and potentials of the fantasy genre' (2016, loc. 649). Christopher Hollingworth's *Alice Beyond Wonderland: Essays for the Twenty-First Century* (2009) focuses on both recent and older adaptations of Carroll's texts in media as different as madness studies, childhood studies, and hyperspace philosophy. Finally, Laura Tosi's *The Fabulous Journeys of Alice and Pinocchio* (2018)—which traces the many similarities between the two texts (including the structures of the stories, the metamorphosis of their protagonists, and the use of the fantasy tradition), along with their differences (such as the different social spheres of the protagonists, the respective satirical and didactic intent of the narratives, and the different treatment of physical suffering)—devotes two chapters to the nineteenth-century narratives' evolution and their transcendence of temporal and national boundaries through contemporary works by Angela Carter, Thomas Hughes, George Henty, Edmondo De Amicis, and Emilio Salgari.

The volume that is closer to the present collection is *'Tantalizing Alice': Approaches, Concepts and Case-Studies in Adaptations of a Classic* (2016, edited by Sissy Helff and Nadia Butt), whose twelve essays focus on issues and adaptations examined here (such as the narrativization of Carroll's life and the eroticization of his alleged pedophilia, the Burton/Robyn cinematic duology, and the computer game *Alice: Madness Returns*), but also study a series of topics and texts that are not analyzed in this volume, including fan fiction, wedding settings, photography, early cartoons, circus productions, and Susan Sontag's *Alice in Bed* (1994).¹⁷ Helff and Butt's book uses a comparative interdisciplinary approach assessing a wide spectrum of Alice adaptations and could, therefore, be considered as an ideal companion to the present collection.

Alice in Wonderland in Film and Popular Culture examines the many reincarnations of Carroll's texts, illuminating how the meaning of the original books has been re-negotiated through adaptations,

¹⁷ Susan Sontag's *Alice in Bed* is a 1993 play in eight scenes presenting the fictionalized character of Alice James, sister of the intellectuals Henry and William James who died of breast cancer at forty-three. In the play, set in London in 1890, the protagonist is forced to her death bed, where she is visited by her relatives and some literary personages; her interior journey and exploration of the past is characterized by the death wish and the curative function of fantasy. The parallels with Carroll's novels abound, from the mirror motif and references to hookahs, changes in size, and dreams to a recreation of an exclusively female tea party. As Nadia Butt argues, "the play is, in reality, a vehement vituperation of gender discrimination towards a woman who aims to explore her physical and mental talents as freely as her male counterparts, but is brutally thwarted by social and familiar mores" (2016, 115).

appropriations, and transmediality. The volume is an edited collection of eighteen essays and is divided into three sections. In the first section the contributors analyze several literary re-interpretations of the *Alice* books. In the second chapter Antonio Sanna traces the evolution of Carroll's texts through their numerous adaptations and appropriations on the page, presenting a history of them until the present day in literature, comics, and graphic novels. The third chapter, by Olga Bukhina, explores how the transcultural iterations of the *Alice*'s topsy-turvy wordplay and food transformations permeate such American classics as Carl Sandburg's *Rootabaga Stories* (1922) and Norton Juster's *The Phantom Tollbooth* (1961) as well as the contemporary Russian children's poetry by Arthur Givargizov and Masha Rupasova. The following chapter, by Maciej Skowera, focuses on contemporary fiction (from 1970s to 2010s) presenting Dodgson's life to show the ways in which the biography of *Alice*'s creator has been adapted and to reflect on how the patterns of the interpretation of it (specifically, the discourses of the 'saint' and the 'pedophile') and the reception of the books themselves (such as psychoanalytical or psychedelic analyses) affect it. In the fifth chapter Brigid Cherry draws on Thomas Leitch's 2012 account of adaptation and intertextuality in order to consider the remediations of the *Alice* texts in Bryan Talbot's *Alice in Sunderland* (2007), Alan Moore's *Lost Girls* (2009), and Bill Willingham's *Jack of Fables* (2006–11). Eileen M. Harney's chapter considers the portrayal of the two protagonists in the first run of DC Comics' Batwoman series (2009–15), which was designed to break boundaries and challenge norms in the hyper-masculine, heteronormative world of the DC Comics of ten years ago by having an LGBTQ lead character. The last chapter of the first section, by Rick Hudson, bridges over the next section by exploring how Carroll's characters are used within DC comics' Batman stories (and their adaptations in TV cartoons and the TV series *Gotham*) and how they develop the themes of madness and the monstrous in a fictional world that foregrounds these two tropes in both its villains and its heroes.

The second section focuses on the cinematographic and television adaptations of the original books. Joy E. Morrow and Christopher Flavin examine several cinematic adaptations of Carroll's stories, from the first silent shorts to Disney's most recent films, focusing on their shift in tone in the representation of Alice and the Queen of Hearts as suggestive of a different interpretation of class and ideological structure throughout the past century. In the second chapter Martin F. Norden focuses on Disney's 1959 animation film *Donald in Mathmagic Land* and demonstrates how

the studio's interest in using film to teach mathematical concepts was strongly informed by Carroll's unique literary blend of logic, mathematics, and surrealism. The third chapter, by Alexandra Heatwole, interprets the Burton/Bobin duology as a (post)feminist retelling of the original narratives granting the young adult Alice agency and the ability to rewrite both past and future. In the following chapter Lindsey Scott reads Alice's journey down the rabbit hole through a series of works—such as *Pan's Labyrinth* (2008), *The Hunger Games* (2008–10), and *Stranger Things* (2016)—that expressly engage with horror, present a complex range of gender-related issues, and prompt discussion over censorship and the preservation of childhood boundaries. The fifth chapter, by Andrew Grossman, focuses on Kerry Feltham's *Chicago 70*, a largely forgotten work of agit-prop that grafts transcripts of the 'Chicago 7' trial onto the narrative skeleton of *Alice in Wonderland*. Grossman argues that the film represents less a process of 'smooth' translation than a deliberately jagged and ironic dialectic that renders real the violence implicit in Carroll's Wonderland. The concluding chapter of the section, by Carla Fusco, analyzes Woody Allen's free adaptation of the story in *Alice* (1990), a modern-day rendering of the narrative consisting in a hilarious pastiche of hectic metropolitan sequences alternated with dream-tableaux. Fusco's chapter is based upon a hermeneutic analysis that focuses on detecting the many suggestions deriving from the distinction between the character and the performer through a structuralist approach.

The last section of the volume examines the remediations of the original texts into other media, such as in the branches of commerce and the space of the city, videogames, photographs, music videos, theatrical plays, and madness and nonsense studies, thus expanding this volume's scope into several other areas of inquiry. The section begins with a chapter by Anne-Marie Beller and Claire O'Callaghan which focuses on a range of texts, images, and other media that appropriate Alice in sexual, erotic, and pornographic ways (including various popular images from fan fiction websites) and traces the parallels between the fetishization of the female child in Victorian and contemporary society. In the second chapter, Joanna Madlock offers an analysis of the presence of Carroll's characters in the public space of several big cities, concentrating on the commercial uses of motifs from Carroll's books and the incorporation of *Alice*-originated names in the signifying systems of different branches of commerce and in publicly displayed art. The following chapter, by Masafumi Monden, proposes, through a study of the music video for Japanese pop artist Aimer's

chart-topping song ‘I Beg You’ (2019), that Alice’s image in Japan is strongly intertwined with the concept of *shōjo*, a representation of liminal femininity and girlhood in Japanese culture. In the fourth chapter, Dominique Angela Juntado and Antonio Sanna examine how the video-game American McGee’s *Alice* and its sequel *Alice: Madness Returns* portray the way in which certain anxieties in ‘growing up’ influence the framing of how a person receives the concept of identity and its construction. This discussion presents a sociocultural vista which looks into how characters, dialogue, and locations demonstrate and comment on ideas of socialization and the conscious experiences that come with certain life stages. The chapter by Amanda Rutherford and Sarah Parker explores how the original character of the Mad Hatter has transgressed across platforms and genres to become a representation of what is considered the go-to depiction for clowning and craziness, and to act as a parody for contemporary issues and concerns by tricking and disguising morals and good advice within his narrative. In the last chapter of the volume Emily Scherzinger and Jeffery Donaldson study the nonsensical nature of *Alice’s Adventures* by including madness into the postulations on nonsense and meaning-making practices within the text and by incorporating the conceptualization of interpretation that founds auto-theory, a growing field of feminist hermeneutics, to consider the creation of a ‘mad hermeneutics.’

This collection is an addition to the existing work on *Alice in Wonderland* and its sequels, adaptations, and appropriations, and helps readers to have a more comprehensive view of the extent to which the Alice story world (like many other canonical texts) is vast and always growing. Carroll’s Victorian texts have accompanied us during the past century and a half, establishing roots in (and reflecting) our culture throughout the globe with their numerous versions in different media. The volume in your hands will help you navigate and interpret such a process and evolution, and become ‘curiosier and curiosier’ about such an expanding cultural phenomenon.

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PART I

Alice on the Page



A History of the Literary and Graphic Adaptations and Appropriations of *Alice*

Antonio Sanna

Lewis Carroll, pen name for Charles Lutwidge Dodgson (1832–98), was tutor in Mathematics, Deacon of Christ Church College in Oxford, and curator of its Senior Common Room. He was a shy, abstemious, reclusive don, a laborious, didactic, and punctilious worker with a pronounced stutter, but also a photographer and an inventor. Before writing *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*, Carroll had already published several mathematical works, including the *Syllabus of Plain Algebraical Geometry* (1860), *The Formulae of Plain Trigonometry* (1861), and *A Guide to the Mathematical Student* (1864).¹ The first Alice book, published in 1865, presented a 'self-contained fantastic universe that did not depend on any

¹ Carroll's subsequent literary publications include: the collection *Phantasmagoria and Other Poems* (1869), the celebrated non-sense poem *The Hunting of the Snark* (1872), the novel *Sylvie and Bruno* (1889) and its second part *Sylvie and Bruno Concluded* (1893), and the collection *Three Sunsets and Other Poems* (1898).

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preexisting literary template' (Pilinovski 2009, 178). *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* was an instant success, due also to its originality when compared to the previous books for children (such as Charles Kingsley's 1863 *The Water Babies*), whose didacticism and moral purpose were central to the narrative (Green 1974, 59). In 1871 Carroll published the sequel *Through the Looking Glass*, which is heavily based on the mirror-reflection motif, the theme of the double, and the chess game (the characters' moves in the story are strictly in accordance with the laws of the game). Alice's first story was subsequently re-modeled by Carroll into a shortened and simplified edited version addressed to children under the age of six with color illustrations, titled *The Nursery Alice*, which was published in 1890. By the time of Carroll's death in 1898 *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* had sold almost 180,000 copies, an amount that rose to about 600,000 copies only a decade later (Jones and Gladstone 1995, 13). By the end of the nineteenth century *Alice* came to be at the top of the list of the ten children's books most in demand.

The two books have been translated in over 170 languages, and they have been annotated (Martin Gardner's *The Annotated Alice*, published in 1960, is the most celebrated version) and illustrated. Carroll himself drew thirty-seven illustrations for the first version of the story, titled *Alice's Adventures under Ground* (1864). The illustrations by John Tenniel accompanied instead the official publication of the text by Macmillan in 1865 and have since been considered an integral part of the books. Tens of illustrators have subsequently contributed to the visual realization of Carroll's ideas on the page, the most popular being those by Arthur Rackham in 1907, Max Ernst in 1941, Salvador Dalí in 1970, and Lizbeth Zwerger in 1999, although the (countless) list of illustrators includes also Willy Pogany (1929), Phillip Gough (1949), Barry Moser (1982), Anthony Browne (1988), Greg Hildebrandt (1990), and David Frankland (1996). As Will Brooker points out, the majority of the illustrators have not 'fully escap[ed] the visual stamp that Tenniel first imposed in the mid-1860s, thus further establishing the cultural authority of the Victorian illustrator's original designs' (2004, 143).² On the other hand, as Chi-Min Chang notes, 'As Carroll's text remains the same, the following illustrations render much evidence of how the lineage of Alice's story develops and serves as an index to how the story is read/viewed in different ages'

² Pop-up books and I-pad versions of the story could be equally considered as illustrations. An analysis of some of these is provided by Anna Kérchy (2016).

(2017, 4). Noteworthy are, for example, the innovative illustrations of the story that challenge the representation of the young protagonist as a Caucasian child, as is the case of Nancy Sheppard's *Alitji in Dreamland* (1975, illustrated by Donna Leslie), Whoopi Goldberg's *Alice* (1993), and Erin Taylor's *Alice's Wonderful Adventures in Africa* (2012). In these books, the young protagonist is drawn respectively as an Indigenous girl living in Australia, a young Afro-American visiting a fantastical New York, and an African girl journeying through the jungle and the Savannah. These new versions of the story thus relocate the original narrative to another geographical and cultural context, assuming the instructive function of literature alongside its value as entertainment.

At the same time, Carroll's books have inspired a great number of poems, short stories, and novels that imitated and appropriated the contents, characters, and atmosphere of the originals, equally included many poems, songs, and nursery rhymes, and often quoted directly from their predecessor.³ Some writers colonized Carroll's Wonderland in a 'cheerfully and openly parasitic' manner, as Douglas-Fairhurst argues (2006, 221). Other writers merely reproduced the formula of a young character visiting a strange land: the protagonists travel to fantastic lands and experience colorful adventures, whose events do not necessarily follow the rules of physics and logic of our own world. In Christina Rossetti's *Speaking Likeness* (1874), for example, food floats over the table and serves itself to

³ Providing an exhaustive list of *Alice*-inspired books would be very difficult. Among those texts that were published during Carroll's life we could mention: M.C. Pyle's *Minna in Wonderland* (1869), Mary Dummett Nauman's *Eva's Adventures in Shadow-Land* (1872), F.E. Weatherly's *Elsie's Expedition* (1874), Jean Jambon's *A Trip to Blunderland* (1877), Frances Hodgson Burnett's 'Behind the White Brick' (1879), Clare Bradford Ethel's *Adventures in the Doll Country* (1880), Edward Holland's *Mabel in Rhymeland* (1885), and Charles E. Carryl's *Davy and the Goblin* (1885) and *The Admiral's Caravan* (1891). After Carroll's death, imitations and appropriations have flourished until the present day. They include: Florence Adele Evans' *Alice's Adventures in Pictureland* (1900), Horace M. Wyatt's *Alice in Motorland* (1904) and *Malice in Kulturland* (1915), Howard R. Garis' *Uncle Wiggily* stories (1910–22), Steve McCaffery's *Alice in Plunderland* (1910), Una McDonald's *Alys in Happyland* (1913), E.F. Benson's David Blaize books (1916–24), Mary Dummett Nauman's *Eva's Adventures in Shadow-Land* (1922), Car Sandburg's *Rootabaga* series (1922–30) (examined in Chap. 3 of the present collection), Ernest La Prade's *Alice in Orchestrabilia* (1925) and its sequel *Marching Notes* (1929), and, in more recent times, Angela Carter's short story 'Wolf Alice' (1979), Stephanie Bolster's *White Stone: The Alice Poems* (1988), Katie Roiphe's *Still She Haunts Me* (2001) (examined in Chap. 4), Frank Beddor's Young Adult *The Looking Glass Wars* trilogy (2004–09), and J.T. Holden's retelling of the story in rhyming verses in *Alice in Verse* (2010).

the guests of a banquet, furniture moves around, and doors disappear. Similarly, in Maggie Brown's *Wanted—A King* (1890) leaves become gigantic, envelope the protagonist and fly her over a distance, sign-posts give oral directions to passers-by, and newborn babies are able to talk eloquently. Some of the young protagonists in Alice-inspired stories are well-mannered, like the eponymous protagonist in Edward Knatchbull-Hugessen's *Ernest* (1869), who is self-composed and polite throughout his visit down a well inhabited by speaking toads and mice and to the brink of a precipice at the end of the world. Other characters are instead spoiled children who must learn their lesson in the otherworldly realms they visit—as in Juliana Horatia Ewing's 1870 *Amelia and the Dwarfs* and in Tom Hood's *From Nowhere to the North Pole* (1875).⁴ Among the didactic stories inspired by Carroll are Alice Corkran's *Down the Snow Stairs* (1887) and Audrey Mayhem Allen's *Gladys in Grammarland* (1897). In the former, the representation of the dissolute Naughty Children Land and the story's morals certainly offer a series of lessons for young readers in how to behave properly, whereas the depiction of Grammarland in Mayhem Allen's novel is helpful for children to understand and apply grammatical concepts such as transitivity and intransitivity. On the other hand, sentimental narratives such as Jean Ingelow's *Mopsa the Fairy* (1869) and G.E. Farrow's *Wallypug* books (1895–1905) can be rather defined as escapist fantasies for their lighthearted narratives,

⁴ In Juliana Horatia Ewing's *Amelia and the Dwarfs*, the eponymous child protagonist has a 'strong, resolute will,' is 'tiresome,' and 'a way of her own too' (1997, 29). She breaks objects during social visits at the houses of her mother's friends, abruptly interrupts private conversations, teases and torments animals, and mistreats her maids. During a summer night she is abducted by the dwarves and brought underground, where she has to wash all the frocks of her own she has ruined in the past, to mend all the things she has broken, and is then offered meals made of all the food she has previously wasted. After she is allowed to return home by the dwarves, she wakes up in her bed and discovers she has actually suffered from delirious fever. However, as the text specifies, she 'grew up good and gentle, unselfish and considerate for others [and] became so popular with her mother's acquaintances' (Ewing 1997, 49). In Tom Hood's *From Nowhere to the North Pole*, the young protagonist, Frank, is a destructive and selfish child who learns his lesson when he meets the vindictive dolls of his sister he has broken and the nightmarish, famished creatures he has once dreamed about. In this narrative as well the mischievous protagonist learns by amending for his past mistakes and misbehavior.

fairytale settings, atmosphere of enchantment and magic, wordplay, and nonsensical situations.⁵

Many writers published stories intended to be sequels to Carroll's originals. Novels such as George Hartley's *A Few More Chapters of Alice Through the Looking-Glass* (1875), Gilbert Adair's *Alice Through the Needle's Eye* (1984), Nadine Amadio's *The New Adventures of Alice in Rainforest Land* (1988), and Keith Steppard's *Wonderland Revisited and the Games Alice Played There* (2009) demonstrate their writers' will to follow Carroll's spirit by introducing new, amazing creatures the young protagonist interacts with and by bringing Alice (whether she is the original Alice or another young girl by the same name) into other fantastic (realistic, surreal, or dystopian) environments. The sequel stories follow the structure of the original books, reproducing certain fundamental landmarks of Alice's itinerary in Wonderland and through the Looking Glass, presenting absurd situations and nonsensical language, and even explicitly referring to Carroll's stories as published books. In Anna M. Richards' *A New Alice in the Old Wonderland* (1895), for example, the child Alice Lee dreams about going herself to Wonderland and encountering many of Carroll's characters, whereas, in John Rae's *New Adventures of Alice* (1917), young Betsy dreams about finding a sequel book in the attic (titled *More Adventures of Alice!*) on Alice's visit to the fantastic land of Mother Goose, where she meets the characters of nursery rhymes.⁶ Simultaneously, some literary adaptations of Carroll's novels also offer the occasion for their authors to explore thematic concerns not present (or treated indirectly) in Carroll's stories, such as the representation of physical mortality, the grotesque, and social discrimination (Dorothy Hewett's collection of poems *Alice in Wormland* [1987]), and the existence of

⁵In Jean Ingelow's *Mopsa the Fairy* the protagonist, Jack, helps the title character to become queen of the fairies. During the course of his journey he meets his own double, eats at sumptuous banquets, and visits amazing places such as glittering caves and rich castle halls. In the first volume of G.E. Farrow's *Wallypug* series, titled *The Wallypug of Why* (1895), the King of the realm of Why (where all questions find their answers) is the mistreated servant of his own subjects in a topsy-turvy world where the social rules governing nineteenth-century society are inverted.

⁶Betsy's description of the sequel book on Alice's adventures in John Rae's *New Adventures of Alice* could be considered as a good description of many sequels, adaptations, and appropriations of Carroll's stories: 'There were exactly the same kind of stiff little pictures of Alice that she had loved in the battered old red book, from which Mother had just been reading. Alice doing this, Alice doing that, and usually surrounded by strangely dressed people or creatures' (1917, 14).

alternate universes, chaos theory, and the investigation of murders (Jeff Noon's *Automated Alice* [1996]).

Mere references and allusions to *Alice in Wonderland* and *Through the Looking Glass* also abound in texts belonging to different contexts and literary genres, including James Joyce's nonsensical *Finnegans Wake* (1939), Elizabeth Bishop's poems, the poetry and prose of Sylvia Plath,⁷ Agatha Christie's travel book *Come, Tell Me How You Live* (1946), and several works by Vladimir Nabokov (who translated Carroll's 1865 book into Russian in 1923). The names of Carroll's characters or events from the original novels are mere pretexts in Joyce Carol Oates' depiction of a materialistic and nihilistic society in *Wonderland* (1971), in Stephen R. Donaldson's fantasy novels *Mordant's Need* (1986–87) (in which the heroine is transported to a Medieval world where magic is linked with mirrors), in Adam Gopnik's fantasy novel *The King in the Window* (2005) (which presents a ten-year-old boy who has to save souls in an ancient-style French spirit kingdom), and in Gena Showalter's Young Adult series *The White Rabbit Chronicles* (2012–19)—on a teenager's apocalyptic fight against zombies. On the other hand, Roger Zelazny's fantasy novel *Sign of Chaos* (1987) directly inserts Carroll's characters into the narrative when Merlin finds himself in a LSD-induced reality in which he has to fight against the Jabberwock. None of these narratives, however, is a proper sequel or re-elaboration of the original stories, but only reflects the cultural relevance and influence of them throughout the decades.

Noteworthy is the fact that Carroll's stories have also been appropriated in the science fiction genre—as the cases of Jack Chalker's *The Wonderland Gambit* (1995–97), Tad Williams' *Otherland* (1996–2001), Jeff Noon's *Vurt* (1993) and *Pollen* (1995), John Ringo's *Looking Glass* series (2005–09), and Rudy Rucker's works demonstrate. Whether it is an interdimensional gateway leading to a fight against demonic invaders intent on annihilating Earth's population (in Ringo's saga), a series of 'rabbit-holes' allowing time- and space-jumps from one reality to another (in Chalker's trilogy), an alternate reality accessed after the assumption of a hallucinogenic drug (in Noon's novels), or the abandonment of a person's flesh-and-blood body to enter a mysterious golden city inside a virtual reality (in Williams' tetralogy), the structures of these narratives bear many similarities with (and include several explicit references to) the original nineteenth-century novels. Indeed, Alice's original journey to another,

⁷For a study on the subject see Jessica Hritz McCort's PhD 2009 thesis.

fantastic world (possibly, a hostile environment) is an apt analogy for the exploration of other planets, dimensions, and realities the characters have no knowledge of and their encounter with unknown creatures and the difficulties or dangers in relating with them, which represents the basis of science fiction, along with the ‘capacity to open up imaginative possibilities’ (King and Krzywinska 2000, 1), which is a characteristic of the original novels as well.⁸

Alice in Wonderland has influenced also non-fictional texts, becoming a vehicle for the study of the emergence of cognition in Douglas R. Hofstadter’s *Gödel, Escher, Bach* (1979), an instrument for the depiction of resistance in East Germany in Anna Funder’s *Stasiland* (2003), and an allegory for the spiritual search for happiness and peace in Travis Arias’ *The Secret Way of Alice* (2017). Also, Carroll’s texts have been inspirational for autopathographical texts such as the memoirs of schizophrenia *Girl, Interrupted* (1993) by Susanna Kaysen and *Welcome, Silence: My Triumph over Schizophrenia* (2003) by Carol North, and Marya Hornbacher’s memoir of anorexia *Wasted* (1999). As Rachel Falconer argues, Kaysen’s and Hornbacher’s books conflate the underworld spaces of Carroll’s novels and Dante’s hell in order to create ‘a doubled and doubling kind of memoir, at once serious and frivolous, public and intimate, rational and “disorderly”’ (2009, 4). Intertextual references to Carroll’s original novels have similarly been appropriated in texts that discuss the (ab)use of drugs. Exemplary of the latter are Beatrice Sparks’ *Go Ask Alice* (1971) and John Shelton and Ron Lajeunesse’s book *Addicts in Wonderland* (2011), respectively a fictional diary and a prose narrative, both of whom use Carroll’s verses and characters to describe in the first person the experience of descent into abuse and the illusory feelings of empowerment of drug addicts. In both autopathographical texts and the memoirs of drug addiction, Alice’s fall into and exploration of the unknown subterranean realm (as well as her encounter with the irrational people and creatures inhabiting it) is reframed as an individual’s exploration of his/her own disordered self and distorted perception of reality, and as a study of the alienation respectively dictated by mental illness, eating disorders, or drug

⁸ Science fiction cinema as well, which itself often borrows from other genres, makes use of an ample range of sources. As Geoff King and Tanya Krzywinska note, indeed, ‘From the 1890s to the current Hollywood romance with special effects extravaganzas, science fiction cinema has borrowed from a variety of sources. These range from Greek tragedy and the epic to melodrama and gothic fiction, from the western and horror novel to the literature of science fiction’ (2000, 3).

abuse.⁹ The development of the illness and of the addiction is indeed narrated as a difficult progress across a new realm until the return to physical or mental sanity and stability. Simultaneously, the more or less explicit references to the original nineteenth-century narratives by Carroll are used as a form of critique of contemporary institutions (psychiatric clinics) and social practices (our culture's obsession with physical stereotypes of beauty) or as warnings for the readers not to repeat (and indulge in) such unhealthy, degrading, or isolating experiences.

Political satire has been equally influenced by Carroll's books since their publication. Tenniel's illustrations themselves allude to some of the most renowned politicians of the Victorian age: Tenniel was a cartoonist for the weekly journal *Punch* and his illustrations of Carroll's books were targeted by his adversaries in the last decades of the nineteenth century, as Franziska Kohlt has noted (2018, 2). Tens of cartoonists have reproduced the Victorian cartoonist's style—and the very appearance of his Wonderland characters—in order to draw the appearance of (and satirize) politicians and public persons throughout the twentieth century and the present age. Such appropriations include Saki's *The Westminster Alice* (1902), Edward Hope's *Alice in the Delighted States* (1928), and the caricatures by *The Guardian's* Leslie Gibbard during the 1960s and 1970s. Two recent examples are offered by Leavis Carroll's (pen name for Lucien Young) *Alice in Brexitland* (2017) and Madeleine Kay's *Theresa Maybe in Brexitland* (2017), whose texts and illustrations (respectively by Ollie Mann and by Kay herself) satirize the contemporary political situation of the United Kingdom and the United States by transforming politicians such as Theresa May, David Cameron, and Donald Trump into the characters of the Alice books. Whether the target of the satire is the government's inability to deal with the Boer War (in Caroline Lewis' *Clara in Blunderland* [1902]), public and private property (in John Kendrick Bangs' *Alice in Blunderland* [1907]), or Nazi propaganda (in James Dyrenforth and Max Kester's book *Adolf in Blunderland* [1939]), throughout the past century and a half Carroll's novels have inspired (through their plots, characters, images, and nonsensical events) the

⁹ In Shelton and Lajeunesse's *Addicts in Wonderland*, the craving for cocaine is allied to the 'Jabberwocky,' a monster lurking in the dark and tempting the protagonist to indulge in his vices and addiction. The assumption of drugs is associated to a journey to the land of fantasy, whereas the descent into addiction is compared to the slow, conscious fall into the rabbit-hole.

creation of texts, cartoon strips, and caricatures that criticize the members of some government, parody their quotes, sarcastically illustrate the procrastinating conflicts of ineffectual parliamentary debates and party tactics, and mock political theories or the opposition to reforms.¹⁰

Carroll's characters from the Alice books have also been adapted and appropriated in comics (most notably, DC's *Batman* and *Batwoman*, which are examined in Chaps. 6, 7, and 18 of the present collection) and, more recently, in graphic novels and manga. Alice became a character for the first time in a comic strip adaptation by the United Feature Syndicate (1934–35), and was subsequently adapted by Dell Comics' (1951), Gold Key Comics (1965), Whitman (1984), and Dynamite Entertainment (2005). While these comics generally reproduce faithfully the original adventures of Carroll's novels (or the plot of the 1951 Disney cinematographic adaptation), several modern-day manga comics contain instead only references to the Alice story and characters. This is the case, for example, of Jun Mochizuki's *Pandora Hearts* (2006–15)—in which Alice is a heroine helping the male protagonist to fight the murderous creatures of the otherworld known as the Abyss—and Kaori Yuki's *Alice in Murderland* (2014)—whose teenage protagonist engages in a survival game in order to stop the ritualistic bloodshed occurring in her adoptive family. On the other hand, the graphic novels that re-envision the adventures of Alice either follow the outline of the originals' storyline and depiction of the characters, or they re-invent them by adapting the original stories into new temporal and geographical contexts and/or creating a sequel to them. As is the case of the numerous literary adaptations of Carroll's novels, graphic novels often become vehicles for the exploration of several themes not necessarily present in the original texts. Whether the protagonist is the real Alice Liddell, or the adult daughter of the novels' character, or a grown-up

¹⁰ Saki criticizes the government's ineptitude in dealing with the Boer War through the representation of a novel character called Ineptitude. In John Kendrick Bangs' *Alice in Blunderland*, the Hatter visits Alice and takes her to the town he has founded and runs as Major. In such a place all property has been declared public, including people's teeth and their children. The latter are guarded by a severe Duchess. In this work Kendrick Bangs is extremely critical of early-twentieth-century corporate capitalism. Edward Hope's *Alice in the Delighted States* satirizes immigration policy, Prohibition, censorship, and fashion through the representation of young Alice on Jealous Island. Dyrenforth and Kester's *Adolf in Blunderland* is equally a defense of freedom of thought and speech against tyranny, dictatorship, and censorship. Unfortunately, many allusions to politicians and their parties' statements and creeds are lost today to contemporary readers who are not familiar with the historical details of the time.

Alice now in her fifties, some graphic novels indirectly examine and portray the creation of art and the genesis of the original narrative (Bryan Talbot's *Alice in Sunderland* [2017]), prostitution, sexual violence, drug use, and dysfunctional families (Alan Moore's *Lost Girls* [1991–2006]) (both analyzed here in Chap. 5), and sexuality and madness (Raven Gregory's *Return to Wonderland* [2009–11]).

As the previous pages demonstrate, since their publication in the second half of the nineteenth century the two *Alice* books have never faded out of popularity throughout the world. Indeed, as Robert Phillips noted, though they were written for children, they 'have transcended that audience' (1974, 18), conquering thousands of adults until the present day. 'They are also the most widely quoted texts after Shakespeare and the Bible,' Catherine Nichols argues (2014, xi) and, as Anna Kérchy affirms, 'by today Alice has also matured into an extra-textual cultural phenomenon one can "know" without actually having read the original novels about her adventures' (2016, loc. 135). Similarly, Thomas Leitch argues: '*Alice* is hyperadaptable because to name any "Alice" is already to invoke this Alice [Carroll's], and to invoke her is already to adapt her. Alice is everywhere' (2016, 26). The character of Alice herself has become a cultural myth, an icon demonstrating the versatility of Carroll's original texts.¹¹ We can thus easily affirm that the Alice story world (as is the case of many other canonical texts) is vast and always growing. As Robert Douglas-Fairhurst correctly states, indeed, 'Wonderland is an imaginary universe that is still expanding' (2006, 428) and the figure of Alice as much as the rest of the characters from Carroll's books keep on generating new versions of themselves through their adaptations and appropriations into literary texts, comics, and graphic novels—as well as in other media. The ongoing dialogue between the novels by Carroll and those texts that have reshaped the precursor texts (what Gerard Genette defined in 1997 as the 'hypotext') has contributed to the reformulation and expansion of *Alice in Wonderland* and its firm eradication in popular conscience. The pleasure of Carroll's novels has therefore been prolonged until the present day by means of their adaptations and appropriations, which have renegotiated the meaning(s) of the hypotexts.

¹¹ As Harry Levin recognized in 1965, 'Clearly the *Alice* books must embody certain archetypes, they must touch off some of the deeper responses of human consciousness, in order to have penetrated so far beyond their immediate period and culture' (1974, 217).

As adaptations, the Alice texts are evidence of the capacity of an adaptation to generate a plurality of meanings. The numerous rewritings of *Alice in Wonderland* and *Through the Looking Glass* actually exemplify the entire range of terminology on adaptations. Following Geoffrey A. Wagner's 1975 definitions, for example, the various versions of Carroll's texts represented on the printed page (as much as in other media) can be considered as 'transpositions' (faithful renderings strictly adhering to the original texts), 'commentaries' (when the original text is 'either purposely or inadvertently altered in some respect' [223]), and 'analogies' (when there is a 'considerable departure for the sake of making another work of art' [227]). Similarly, Alice's adaptations can be either considered as 'retellings' and 'reversions,' to use John Stephen and Robyn McCallum's distinction between adaptations that 'retai[n] as much of the plot, character, setting and thematic material as can be transposed, thus preserving the chronotope of the pretext,' and those that take 'apart its pretext and reassembl[e] it afresh into a new textual and ideological configuration, thus creating a text that is quite new' (qtd. in McCallum 2018, 20). In the same respect, Alice's adaptations (either on the page, in film, and in other media) can be interpreted, following Linda Costanzo Cahir's categorization, as literal, traditional, and radical translations.¹²

The adaptations of *Alice in Wonderland* also confirm Linda Hutcheon's explanation of the pleasure of adaptation as deriving 'simply from repetition with variation, from the comfort of ritual combined with the piquancy of surprise' (2006, 4). They involve indeed a 'process of creation' by means of 'both (re)interpretation and then (re-)creation; and [...] their reception involves a form of intertextuality' in the case of the readers/spectators who are acquainted with the original texts by means of the experience of them 'as palimpsests through [their] memory of other works

¹²Linda Costanzo Cahir uses the term 'translations' rather than 'adaptations' as better describing, in the specific case of films deriving from a literary source, the formation of 'a fully new text—a materially different entity—[...] one that simultaneously has a strong relationship with its original source, yet is fully independent from it' (2006, 14). The difference between the three kinds of translation she illustrates depends on their fidelity to the precursor text: a literal translation is as close as possible to the original work; a traditional translation 'revamps particular details' necessary and appropriate according to the filmmakers; a radical translation 'reshapes the book in extreme and revolutionary ways' (2006, 14–15).

that resonate through repetition with variation' (2006, 7–8).¹³ As many of the texts examined and mentioned in this chapter demonstrate, the (re) creation of the (male or female) protagonist's journey to unknown lands that subvert the rules of logic, physics, and conduct of our own world and his/her encounter with peculiar beings and creatures activate the intertextuality between Carroll's original novels and the new product, reminding readers of Alice's adventures and stimulating them into expecting simultaneously both a reproduction (or allusion to) the original and a different depiction of it. This occurs independently of the actual narratives and characterization of the protagonist as much as independently of the genre the new work belongs to (science fiction, autopathographical memoir, political satire, and so on). Such an intertextuality can be equally experienced through the new work's use of nonsensical language, its depiction of absurd events, and the presence of all the thematic concerns of the precursor texts.

On the other hand, the political and satirical revisions of the Alice stories as well as those literary and graphic reinterpretations of the original novels that relocate the source texts in temporal (and geographic) terms exemplify the concept of appropriation elaborated by Julie Sanders, who argues that an 'appropriation carries out the same sustained engagement of adaptation but frequently adopts a posture of critique, over commentary and even sometimes assault or attack' (2016, 6). As Sanders affirms, an 'appropriation frequently effects a more decisive journey away from the informing text into a wholly new cultural product and domain, often through the actions of interpolation and critique as much as through the movement from one genre to others' (2016, 35).

The Alice books have lent themselves to multicultural explorations by being reconstituted in other cultures and by expressing changes in cultural times and conditions. The story itself, as Kérchy affirms, 'remains recognizably the same, yet turns radically different with each new retelling' (2016, loc. 124) thanks to its textual ambiguity, which allows for varied interpretations, sequels, (re-)adaptations, and appropriations. This

¹³ Hutcheon's definition of 'remediations' applies to the transposition of Carroll's texts into other media, including graphic novels and manga. According to Hutcheon, remediations are indeed 'translations in the form of intersemiotic transpositions from one sign system (for example, words) to another (for example, images)' (2006, 16). This affirmation is valid, of course, in the case of cinematic and TV adaptation of Alice as much as in the case of theatrical performances and ballets, videogames, park rides, shops and commercial products, music videos, and songs.

demonstrates how transcultural and eternal Alice is. Carroll's original texts have been and still are fertile to inspire and stimulate continued cultural production. Their characters have survived outside the original stories, infiltrating other literary works, comics, manga, and graphic novels as much as the most disparate media, such as films, TV series, songs, music videos, videogames, role-playing games, merchandising products, shops, advertisement campaigns, art exhibitions, cosplayer conventions, fashion, tattoos, and so on.

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How Does It Taste: Eating and Drinking with Alice at the International Table

Olga Bukhina

*‘What did they live on?’ said Alice, who always took a great interest in
questions of eating and drinking.*

—Lewis Carroll, *Alice’s Adventures in Wonderland*

Lewis Carroll’s *Alice’s Adventures in Wonderland* (1865) and *Through the Looking-Glass* (1871) are books that not only were transported into multiple languages but also penetrated various world cultures. Their intrinsically English flavor intermingles with deep universal meanings; this magical combination easily travels around the globe and successfully lands into other languages and different media. Images of English food, widely spread throughout Carroll’s books, raise multiple questions on the relationship between food and culture as well on food cultural specificities. This chapter examines how the appropriation of Carroll’s ways of ‘playing with food’ manifests itself in two very different cultures, American and Russian. The appropriation is achieved through ‘a double process of interpreting and then creating something new’ (Hutcheon 2012, 20).

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Following Julie Sanders' understanding of appropriation, in comparison to adaptation, as a more personal and 'decisive journey away from the informing source into a wholly new cultural product and domain' (Sanders 2015, 26), this chapter examines two different types of appropriation represented, respectively, by American and Russian writers. In both countries, authors, for whom the absurd became a pivotal part of writing for children, appropriate *Alice's* representations of food and eating. The appropriative approaches to *Alice* by two American authors that will be discussed in this chapter demonstrate the way in which *Alice* is appropriated within the same language but in a somewhat different culture. This appropriation is accomplished through use of Carroll's imagery and stylistic techniques. The appropriation of *Alice* into Russian, on the other hand, shows the way in which *Alice* is brought into a different language with a very different culture. For contemporary Russian children's poets, as we will see below, it is an attempt to catch and appropriate the quintessential Englishness of Carroll's books. In both cases of appropriation, American and Russian, as Nicklas and Lindner define the term, the original 'material is broken up to become part of a new living organism' (2012, 6), but with very different results.

Food and its consumption are, and always were, equally intrinsic parts of literature and of life. Kara K. Keeling and Scott T. Pollard, two of the leading researchers on the topic, start their preface to the edited volume *Critical Approaches to Food in Children's Literature* (2009) with one of the oldest literature pieces, Homer's *Odyssey*. Moving on to more contemporary literature, they state that food is an 'essential interpretive trope for children's literature' (Keeling and Pollard 2009, 17); childlore and children's literature incorporate this tradition faithfully. Tastes of numerous foods fill children's books; it is difficult to find one that will not mention anything eatable. The relationships between children and food are deep and fundamental, and children's literature is intimately connected with eating practices as cultural phenomena and as everyday experiences: 'Food experiences form part of the daily texture of every child's life from birth onwards, as any adult who cares for children is highly aware; thus it is hardly surprising that food is a constantly recurring motif in literature written for children' (Keeling and Pollard 2009, 10). In their more recent book Keeling and Pollard (2020) describes how food functions differently in children's texts depending on various sociocultural contexts. Some scholars stress the social component of food intake; others connect an abundance of food in children's books with the notion of hunger that

consumed various societies throughout the history. As Susan Honeyman states, ‘When an entire culture creates, retains, and shares tales of food utopias, it is intuitive to conclude that they were prompted by hunger’ (2010, 45).

This socially conditioned abundance of food is clearly seen in many British books. As Carolyn Daniel affirms, indeed, ‘The British classics in particular are a rich source of fictional feasting: copious quantities of rich, sweet and, by contemporary standards, fat-laden foods are frequently served to children who seem to have huge appetites’ (2006, 2). The abundance of food in children’s books is greatly stressed also by Michael Flanagan (2014), who runs through the list of English classics: Charles Dickens’ *Oliver Twist* (1838) and *A Christmas Carol* (1843), Kenneth Grahame’s *The Wind in the Willows* (1908), P.L. Travers’ *Mary Poppins* (1934–88), Enid Blyton’s *The Famous Five* (1942–63), as well as Carroll’s *Alice*. We can add to this list C.S. Lewis’ *The Chronicles of Narnia* (1950–56), where food plays an important role in its plot development and in the pace of the narration. In Lewis’ narrative the evil attraction of Turkish delight coexists with the teatime as an important pause in the rapid progress of the story, and the ability to have a quiet after-the-battle afternoon tea defines its turns and twists. Not a single book of the above-mentioned list would ‘dare’ to omit its afternoon tea, from the ‘Mad Hatter’s distinctly uncivilized tea party’ (Flanagan 2014, 47) to the tea with the Beavers while escaping from the White Witch. This tradition holds on in British children’s literature, including such gems as Elizabeth Goudge’s *The Little White Horse* (1946), Philippa Pearce’s *Tom’s Midnight Garden* (1958), and, more recently, J.K. Rowling’s *Harry Potter* saga (1997–2007). All of these books are full of food, mostly in the form of great feasts and delicious sweets, often outside of the realm of ordinary, for the sake of asserting the vitality and abundance of goodness.¹

It is helpful to explore the topsy-turvy food representation in children’s books through the lens of the Bakhtinian theory of carnival and the concept of the grotesque body. A very important part of a carnival is food consumption: ‘Eating and drinking are one of the most significant manifestations of the grotesque body;’ while eating, ‘the body transgresses [...] its own limits: it swallows, devours, rends the world apart, is enriched and grows at the world’s expense’ (Bakhtin 1965/2009, 281). As I have

¹ Some of this may be explained by the post-World War II food obsession caused by the war and post-war time rationing with enough nutritious, but boring foods (Flanagan 2014).

argued elsewhere, ‘The food consumption [...] is very important in children’s books. From ‘more porridge please’ of Dickens’ *Oliver Twist* to an abundance of the dishes at the *Harry Potter* Hogwarts’ feasts, children’s books are full of the vitality of eating. In this sense, they are truly Rabelaisian (Bukhina 2019a, 181–82). The main question here is what and whom can you eat. Carnival is not only about the amount of food; carnival also changes familiar dichotomies of the eater and the eatable, or eatable and non-eatable. A long-standing tradition of dividing the world into things eatable and non-eatable is beautifully expressed by a minor character in Jules Verne’s *Twenty Thousand Leagues Under the Seas* (1872). Professor Pierre Aronnax’s travel companion, master harpooner Ned Land, is not concerned about the marine biology definitions and classifications of fish; Ned simply wants to know whether this fish is good to cook. Another minor character, the Duck in *Wonderland*, sees the world similarly: “‘I know what ‘it’ means well enough, when I find a thing,” said the Duck: “it’s generally a frog, or a worm”” (Carroll 1865/1960, 47). At the same time, the Duck is ‘an eatable animal’ (Lee 2014, 484). Who eats whom in children’s books is not always clear, and food can easily turn into a ‘predator’: as Alice wonders while falling into the rabbit-hole, “‘Do cats eat bats? Do cats eat bats?’” and sometimes, “‘Do bats eat cats?’” (Carroll 1865/1960, 28).

Practically every research on the importance of food in writings for children dwells on multiple examples from Carroll’s books. The Victorian writer portrays food consumption as a social occupation, but, according to Michael Parrish Lee, both books ‘open up a space in which food and eating refuse to behave themselves as stage, backdrop, symbols, or empty vessels for any kind of preexisting social’ (2014, 490). A little cake with words ‘Eat me,’ beautifully composed of currants, and a bottle labeled ‘Drink me’ are partners in Alice’s attempts to change her size and to be able to enter into Wonderland through the little door. As Keeling and Pollard argue, ‘Food makes things happen. It is acted upon (cooked, elaborated), but as a cultural force it also acts’ (2009, 13). Playing on what is passive and what is active, Carroll often pictures food as being far from passivity. The leg of mutton at a coronation feast in *Through the Looking-Glass* makes a little bow to Alice during their mutual introduction, and ‘Alice returned the bow, not knowing whether to be frightened or amused.’ The next dish, Pudding, talks back: ‘What impertinence! [...] I wonder how you’d like it, if I were to cut a slice out of you, you creature!’ (Carroll 1871/1960, 331–32). Lee rightfully characterizes such a

‘behavior’ as aggressive. This aggressiveness only increases as the feast progresses, and ‘soon consumers and objects of consumption trade positions’ (Lee 2014, 494) creating total chaos. Now the guests are potentially eatable, and the table utensils can walk and fly. Conversely, in the poem ‘The Walrus and the Carpenter’ recited by Tweedledum and Tweedledee to Alice, oysters, who are at least nominally a part of the conversation, soon are converted, with the help of bread, pepper, and vinegar, into food for the Walrus and the Carpenter to happily consume. As Lee argues, ‘Alice occupies worlds in which subjectivity can become thing-like and the things she would consume are already subjects’ (2014, 494). The topsy-turvy world reverses various roles (king/jester, rich/poor, food/eater) as in the Bakhtinian carnival and gives food its own agency. Human beings could be reduced to food; already cooked food could be elevated into an active actor. Food can be not only an aggressor, but also an enabler.² In the White Rabbit’s house, the little stones that turn into the cakes lure Alice into yet another change of her size.

Although food is usually portrayed as something positive and nourishing, in Carroll’s books, for one of the first times in children’s literature, food is seen as at least ambivalent and conflictual, if not dangerous and poisonous. This ‘prophecy’ by Carroll has now been fulfilled. In the contemporary world of consumer culture, our cravings and greediness affect our well-being. Sugary and fatty foods constantly transform us, exactly as the content of the little bottle, pieces of mushroom, or the little cakes transform Alice. Carroll was able to anticipate and to ‘predict’ a lot of issues that were later appropriated into philosophical, psychological, and cultural discourses; in his books, the consumption of food is intimately connected to the notion of emptiness and fulfillment. From the very beginning, Alice is bored, and the Rabbit Hole turns out to be a vast, empty space; both of them need to be filled and fulfilled. For that, Alice needs to change. The proverbial saying ‘You are what you eat’ characterizes the young protagonist’s capability of being drastically changed—physically and mentally—by food consumption. Nonetheless, the food intake is often done for the sake of communication and connection with others. Eating with others is a ceremonial way of reinforcing your closely related group. Alice’s physical transformations after eating or drinking

²For example, the gingerbread house in the ‘Hanzel and Gretel’ fairy-tale ‘hides a witch who wishes to lure the children into eating in order to eat them herself’ (Honeyman 2010, 49).

make her a part of this new world in which she finds herself. The signs ‘Drink me’ and ‘Eat me’ are probably the first use of ‘advertisement’ in children’s books, and Alice herself becomes a living advertisement of ‘Englishness’ for other cultures. Alice’s relationship with food and the process of eating penetrates international culture in a form of multiple adaptations and appropriations: translations into many languages, original illustrations for many foreign editions, numerous movies, animations, and theater adaptations, not to mention cafes named ‘Alice’s Cup’ (see Chap. 15 for a discussion of the material structure of the twenty-first-century urban landscape and its commercial conditioning).

The intercultural connections between British children’s literature and its American counterparts are vast and numerous. Many British kids’ books were immediately adopted into the American culture as their own. Twentieth-century American children’s literature demonstrates multiple appropriations of British inheritance into a new environment. They, to quote Nicklas and Lindner again, ‘become part of a new living organism’ (2012, 6) that is a new book with, on the surface, no direct ‘citations’ from the British ‘ancestor.’ In these cases, we can talk about appropriation of British authors’ literary features, such as absurdist storyline and word-play, as well as fixation on food imagery. Carroll’s stylistic peculiarities found a new life as essential parts of two children’s classics, Carl Sandburg’s *Rootabaga Stories* (1922) and Norton Juster’s *The Phantom Tollbooth* (1961), both books being indeed often called ‘American’s *Alices*.’ The transcultural iterations of *Alice*’s topsy-turvy language and, in particular, the appropriations of Carroll’s food transformations permeate both books. *Rootabaga Stories* occupies a crossover space where children and adults could share an enjoyment of reading.³ It is exactly where Sandburg planned them to be by making his book equally attractive for children and grown-ups; in his own words, ‘for People from 5 to 105 Years of Age’ (1968, 212). Just like meals that served for the entire family, *Rootabaga Stories* should be ‘consumed’ by all generations together. As J.L. Lynn argues, ‘The “craziness” of the *Rootabaga Stories* comes from incongruity, a device common to poetry and high nonsense. Sandburg glorifies the commonplace, linking high and low, exploiting incongruity’ (1980, 124). The world of the *Rootabaga Country* is as American as *Wonderland* is

³In the 1920s, this position was much more questionable, and *Rootabaga Stories* ‘were neither poetry nor prose, [...] neither didactic enough nor conventionally entertaining enough to be recognizable as standard children’s fare’ (Lynn 1980, 119).

British. Indeed, '[i]n spite of the playfully fantastic in images, names, and narratives, Sandburg never loses sight of the concrete Midwestern world, the base in physical reality from which his imaginative world springs. Rootabaga Country is not above or beyond the American Midwest. It *is* the American Midwest, in another dimension' (Lynn 1980, 125). There is a post office in the center of the Village of Liver-and-Onions; there are vast cornfields around the town, as they are around any Midwestern town. At the same time, for Sandburg, children's books are 'the anarchs of language and speech' (1968, 187) as they should be in the true Carrollian tradition. Readers know that they got into some kind of Wonderland because '[t]he train ran on and on till it stopped running straight and began running in zigzags like one letter Z put next to another Z and the next and the next' (Sandburg 1922/2003, 14–15).

The narrative reveals its anarchical relationships with food and plenty of eatable allusions. The book mentions an abundant variety of foods and drinks produced and eaten in the Rootabaga Country by its dwellers, starting with rutabaga, the vegetable that inspires the title. Food is a background and an essence of well-being; it is an environment its inhabitants live in. Toponyms of the land immediately evoke eatable images: two main towns are the Village of Liver-and-Onions and the Village of Cream Puffs, whose names reflect the preferential tastes of their residents. From the very first chapter, food takes strange and unexpected forms, as is the case of eatable balloons and 'lickable' spoons. In the country of the balloon pickers, food literally is floating in the air: 'Red, blue, yellow balloons, white, purple and orange balloons—peach, watermelon and potato balloons—rye loaf and wheat loaf balloons—link sausage and pork chop balloons—they floated and filled the sky' (Sandburg 1922/2003, 14). In the story describing a special wedding procession, food occupies an honorable place in the very head of the parade: 'Who marched in the procession? Well, first came the Spoon Lickers. Every one of them had a tea spoon, or a soup spoon, though most of them had a big table spoon. On the spoons, what did they have? Oh, some had butter scotch, some had gravy, some had marshmallow fudge' (Sandburg 1922/2003, 100). Sandburg easily mixes all kinds of foods—fruits, breads, and meats, sweet and sour—to bring the image of the abundance of everything, whatever the eager eater may wish to have. It is a childlike desire to mix all your favorite foods on one plate (just to discover that the mixture is not at all attractive or tasty).

Everything could be eatable in the Rootabaga Country: shoes, mittens, and hat may turn into popcorn, and horses will try to chew the popcorn

hat. Food preferences define the population migration—those who like to eat cream puffs one day move out of the Village of Liver-and-Onions to start a new village that would suite them better, the Village of Cream Puffs. During the move, those who are about to have their own village in keeping with their taste almost become a tasty food: ‘They got lost in the blizzard. They expected to die and be buried in the snow for the wolves to come and eat them’ (Sandburg 1922/2003, 35). With all its festive and plentiful appearances, food can easily be coupled with danger. In American lore tradition, as Susan Honeyman notes, this danger is often connected with molasses, thick, dark brown, sticky syrup in which someone may get stuck. As Honeyman argues, ‘Carl Sandburg demonstrates this meaning in his nonsense cautionary tale from the *Rootabaga Stories* called ‘Three Boys with Jugs of Molasses and Secret Ambitions,’ in which each gets caught in the spill from a jug that breaks’ (2010, 49). Molasses from a jar change the size of three boys with peculiar names, Eeta Peeca Pie, Meeny Miney, and Miney Mo. This is a reverential ‘act of citation,’ using Julie Sanders’ expression (2015, 6), or rather, two acts of citation. Firstly, molasses change their sizes the same way particular foods and drinks change Alice’s size in Wonderland, even though the boys do not eat molasses, but step into it with their bare feet. Secondly, in Carroll’s book, the Dormouse tells the story of three little sisters; ‘and their names were Elsie, Lacie, and Tillie; and they lived at the bottom of a well.’ Alice learns that it was a treacle-well, and ‘they live on treacle’ (Carroll 1865/1960, 100), with treacle being a British word for molasses (Jylkka 2015). The molasses sustain three girls; they also initiate the transformation of the three boys: ‘One got littler. Another got littler. All three got littler’ (Sandburg 1922/2003, 115). After almost lifelong adventures in the Potato Bug Country, the boys, like Alice, start their metamorphosis and return back to their normal sizes. This reversal happens by the influence of the drops of the ‘Paris green’ sprayed over the potato plants. In the ordinary life, it is a pigment effective against the Colorado potato beetle, an aggressive agricultural pest, but in the Rootabaga Country it helps the boys to regain their regular size. It is as if Sandburg aims to top Carroll’s absurdism by moving it to the next level. Carroll plays with the juxtaposition of the food and the poison, ‘if you drink much from a bottle marked “poison,” it is almost certain to disagree with you, sooner or later’ (Carroll 1865/1960, 31). Sandburg equalizes the food and the poison by making one the antidote of another. In this case, the appropriation distances itself from the

original by evoking the elements of parody, conscious or unconscious, and as a result, goes further and comes out sharper than the original text.

Maurice Sendak, who is himself intimately connected to the tradition of absurdism in children's books, indicated another American children's classic book, Norton Juster's *The Phantom Tollbooth* (1961), whose '[c]omparison with *Alice in Wonderland* was inevitable' (1996/2011, xiii). Many parallels with Carroll's books are also duly noted by Leonard S. Marcus in his preface and notes to *The Annotated Phantom Tollbooth* (Juster 1961/2011b).⁴ Carroll's impact is quite visible: like Alice herself, Milo, the main character, moves from one reality to another, and the tollbooth plays the role of the rabbit hole. To get into his first destination, Dictionopolis, the city of words, Milo needs to have a reason, and since he does not have one, the gateman helps him. Alice is less lucky in her conversation with the Caterpillar when she 'could not think of any good reason' why the Caterpillar should introduce himself first (Carroll 1865/1960, 68). In the case of Milo, the gateman suggests the universal reason for many things that are happening in these fantasy realms, whether it is Wonderland, the Rootabaga Country, or Dictionopolis: 'WHY NOT?' The gateman explains: 'This's a good reason for almost everything—a bit used perhaps, but still serviceable' (Juster 1961/2011a, 36, 38). To remind a reader of *Alice*, the author brings another important character, a watchdog, whose job is to be sure that nobody is wasting time, moreover, killing time. This is an almost direct reference to the conversation between Alice and the Hatter during the Mad Tea-Party. Food consumption in Dictionopolis, this Wonderland-like space, may take very strange forms. On the market, everything is clearly eatable but consists of words, 'fresh-picked ifs, ands, and buts'; 'nice ripe wheres and whens'; 'juicy, tempting words for sale.' Although the watchdog is more interested in a bone than in all of these words, Milo enjoys tasting the letters: he 'nibbled carefully at the letter and discovered that it is quite sweet and delicious—just the way you'd expect an A to taste' (Juster 1961/2011a, 45). Other letters, Gs and Rs, produce delicious juices. Words and letters make perfect foods, and each of them has a different taste. The quality of taste explains the popularity of individual letters. Z is 'very dry and sawdusty'; X 'tastes like a trunkful of stale air. That's why people hardly ever use them' (Juster 1961/2011a, 50). P even has pits. Making words and letters a part of the

⁴ Both Marcus and Sendak also stress the influence of Kenneth Grahame's *The Wind in the Willows* and his word precision on Juster's writing.

meal, Juster gives food a new meaning: it loses its material substance and is transformed into a pure idea, just as the White Queen's jam: 'The rule is, jam to-morrow and jam yesterday—but never jam *to-day*' (Carroll 1871/1960, 247).

Following Carroll's footsteps, Juster, 'an amateur cook and professional eater,' as he is referred to in the biographical notes on many bookselling websites, does not forget about royal banquets. Every word is taken literally at the banquet in Dictionopolis: a light meal consists of brilliant-color light; 'a square meal' means plates full of 'steaming squares of all sizes and colors' (Juster 1961/2011a, 86). More experienced guests know that they just need to name their favorite dishes to receive desirable and delicious treats. Words materialize into a hamburger, frankfurter, chocolate pudding, or even into jam that Alice never got. The connections between words and objects are direct: half-baked ideas come from the half bakery. As Philip Pullman points out, Juster 'plays with language much as Lewis Carroll did in the Alice books (Carroll himself would have been proud of the car in which you must not talk because it goes without saying). Much of the fun comes from taking idioms literally' (2011, 271). During his trip, Milo meets two kings, the king of words and the king of numbers, and he eats with both of them. King Mathemagicion offers Milo and his companions 'the specialty of the kingdom—subtraction stew' (Juster 1961/2011a, 185).

Food in Digitopolis, the city of numbers, means something opposite: the more Milo eats, the hungrier he gets; a wonderful way to introduce negative numbers. The rules of absurd are often expressed through the food imagery: '[W]e have our meals when we're full and eat until we're hungry' (Juster 1961/2011a, 186). After Princesses Rhyme and Reason are back to the Kingdom of Wisdom, thanks to Milo and his faithful companions, the watchdog Tock and Humbug, there is, of course, a celebratory royal banquet with 'a special supply of delicious words in all flavors and, for these who liked exotic food, in all languages, too' (Juster 1961/2011a, 248). Numbers are not forgotten either; there are 'innumerable platters of division dumplings [...] no matter how many you ate, when you finished there was more on your plate than when you began' (Juster 1961/2011a, 248). Both in Wonderland and in Digitopolis, the opposites change their places: Carroll swaps the eatables for the eater; Juster swaps satiation for hunger. Carroll and Juster use the mathematics with which they are very familiar; Carroll as a mathematical logician, and Juster as an architect. The absurd and witty wordplay in *The Phantom*

Tollbooth has clear educational purposes, such as boosting vocabulary or learning how to add negative numbers. In the end, Milo even explicitly thanks everyone, for everything they have taught him. Carroll's narratives, indeed, have a lighter touch and successfully avoid didactics. Both Sandburg and Juster appropriate Carroll's sense of humor and absurdism as their own; even though, their homages to Carroll are quite subtle, they are full of 'textual echo and allusion' (Sanders 2015, 6) that reveal the intertextual interactions with the original narrative. The use of food imagery with its universality allows both American authors to appropriate not just the absurdist elements of narration, but also Carroll's quintessential physicality and the Bakhtinian embodiment of eating. The food imagery is an intrinsic part of Carroll's texts as well as the texts of both Americans; an appropriation of Carroll's imagery makes two American writers a part of the British tradition of children's literature that is very familiar to an American reader. At the same time, both of them were highly esteemed within their own literary landscape. Following Carroll in his broad scope of themes and ideas, Sandburg was also able not to be restricted to any particular age or type of reader, not even to a child-reader as such, while Juster stayed in a particular age segment of children's literature due to the overt educational purposes of his writing.

The appropriation of the absurdist features within one language could be more easily achieved than an attempt to bring them into another language. We will explore this by focusing on the appropriation of *Alice* into Russian, which presents a very different reality. Maria Nikolajeva sees the categories of nonsense and the absurd intrinsically connected to the reality of the Soviet Union where she grew up (2011, 269). Russia is often seen as an absurdist opposition to the Western world, even though Russian books for children have a lot of similarities with their European and American counterparts, especially in employing absurd language. It is clear that Carroll's influence is not limited by English language and to English-speaking authors. Due to multiple excellent translations into Russian, Carroll is as much at home in Russia as in England. Therefore, how does Carroll's nonsense taste in Russian?

Russian children's literature is very receptive to the absurdist style for several important reasons, political and cultural, and this affinity has had its own long history of using nonsense in writings for children even since the mid-nineteenth century. As Ben Hellman recognizes, 'A favourite among Russian children was Heinrich Hoffmann's *Der Struwwelpeter*' (1845) as well as Wilhelm Busch's *Max und Moritz* (1865), 'a tragicomic

story of two incorrigible pranksters' (2013, 65). Both German authors were translated soon after their first publication, and they introduced the absurd together with 'the black humour and the callousness' to Russian young readers (Hellman 2013, 237–38). The first translation of *Alice* into Russian was also done only fourteen years after the book's first publication. As Hellman argues, 'Thirty years later, there were new attempts to render Carroll's notoriously challenging puns and manifold allusions to English nursery rhymes in Russian. Within a span of five years, no fewer than four translations appeared' (2013, 253). Since then, Carroll's books underwent multiple new translations. During the Soviet time several famous translations of both *Wonderland* and *Through the Looking-Glass* were produced; a few more have appeared in the twenty-first century, the latest of them having been published in 2018. It is especially difficult to estimate a total number of separated translations of 'Jabberwocky'; the count goes on dozens. Carroll's *Alice* has therefore been a cult book in Russia for a century.

The Russian nonsense poetry tradition was developed in the 1920s by the OBERIU authors, Daniil Kharmis and Alexander Vvedensky.⁵ Together with the ever-popular *Alice*, Eduard Lear's poems and limericks, and English nursery rhymes, the OBERIU tradition formed a perfect milieu for the revival of the absurd in contemporary writing for children. Russian children's literature appropriates Englishness as a part of a long-standing practice of translation. Together with many translations from the English, Russian children's poets appropriated the form and the content of English poetry while writing their own. One of the examples of such an appropriation is Vadim Levin's collection *The Silly Horse* (1969), a book of funny stylized absurd poems for children written as if they were translated from English. Jokingly, Levin suggested in the preface that some English poet should write the 'originals' in English to his 'translations' (2014, 3). In a recent biography of Carroll for children, its author, poet, and translator Grigory Kruzhkov, allows himself to write his own stylized poems as if they were written by Carroll. Kruzhkov's radical appropriation makes

⁵ The word OBERIU is an abbreviation of *Ob'edinenie Real'nogo Iskusstva*, the association for real art, with the last 'u' added just for fun and an absurdist touch. It was a collective of the Russian avant-garde writers, musicians, and artists in the 1920s and 1930s. Kharmis and Vvedensky wrote extensively for children, mostly because they were not able to publish their adult poetry due to the Soviet State censorship. Both were arrested and died in prison, but in the last several decades, their writings were returned to Russian readers (Bukhina 2019b, 198–99).

Carroll an author who writes in Russian, even though he provides readers with some clues on how to distinguish his own writing from Carroll's (2021, 50, 51). Through translation and adaptation, the Russian culture, starting from the nineteenth century, often appropriates foreign texts and treats them as its own, especially in children's literature (Hellman 2013). Both adaptation and appropriation can often be a part of a political debate in literature for adults or for children, as happens, for example, in Alexey Tolstoy's *The Golden Key, or the Adventures of Buratino* (1936), an adaptation of Carlo Collodi's *The Adventures of Pinocchio* (1883); Tolstoy's Soviet book adds the motif of class struggle and some revolutionary fervor. Nevertheless, Levin and Kruzhkov stay within a more predominant part of the Russian tradition that appropriates foreign texts. Both these authors show clear connections to British children's literature generally and to Carroll particularly. They do not pursue a goal of making a 'politicized stance' (Sanders 2015, 61), but rather stay in the realm of children's play and children's perception within which authorship is not important.

Contemporary Russian children's poets appropriate Carroll's food-centered narrative; they boldly combine Russian and British traditions with *Alice* being the most influential work. Food is in the center of the topsy-turvy world that penetrates the books of two present-day Russian authors, Marina Boroditskaya and Masha Rupasova.⁶ Rupasova's Sausage King of *The Tale of Sausage King* (2018) rules over the Refrigerator kingdom. He surrounds himself with guards, the Half-Sour Pickles armed by the eggshell shields and scallion lances. He warms himself with a crepe-made mantle—it is cold in the refrigerator after all. To keep order in his kingdom, the Sausage King catches the carrot that is ready to escape from the pot of soup and fights the fatty Mayonnaise that threatens to make all the vegetables unhealthy. In Boroditskaya's poem 'In the Blender' from *Maika's Book* (2015), there is an intense romance of the broccoli and the zucchini in the process of soup preparation. Food acquires an agency: it is not a passive object of eating, but an active and anthropomorphized subject with its own volition. The eater of the soup, a little girl, is also present, but she is in the background, as a passive witness of the events. Other contemporary Russian children's poets also provide plenty of soup recipes that are full of animated and happy-to-be-cooked vegetables. Sometimes, a soup can be a dangerous place, just as molasses. In Mikhail Esenovsky's

⁶ Boroditskaya started her career in the late 1990s, while Rupasova has become very popular in the mid-2010s; they published dozens of kids' books each.

poem 'A Ukrainian Borsch' from *A Fly from Malakhovka* (2016), a fly is in grave danger because she almost drowns in the plate of soup. She is surrounded by 'a potato iceberg, a carrot bolder, an onion slab, and a long and heavy dill stick' (Esenovsky 2016, 42). These numerous soups easily evoke the memories of *Alice's* evening soup: 'Beautiful Soup, so rich and green, Waiting in a hot tureen!' (Carroll 1865/1960, 141). Even though these authors reveal Russian culinary traditions with their half-sour pickles and heavy mayonnaise, the familiar taste of *Alice's* soup is clearly there. The nonsensical Russian poetry for small children welcomes Carroll's food fascination, because it is seen as a symbol of Englishness that is being appropriated into a new environment and new language. This allows Russian children's literature a deep engagement with Carroll's original text and stresses the universality of food in children's books. The easiness of appropriation in the cases mentioned above points to similarities rather than to differences in the role of food in British/American and Russian cultures of childhood, even though its depiction depends on different traditions of these national cuisines.

Carolyn Daniel stresses the civilizing aspects of food consumption in children's book, claiming that 'they must know who eats whom,' and '[f]ood events in children's literature are clearly intended to teach children how to be human' (Daniel 2006, 12). Sometimes, these 'civilizing' purposes may be better reached through the use of the absurd as it was eloquently expressed by a famous contemporary Russian children's poet Grigory Oster in his preface to the book of *Horrible Advice* :

Recently, scientists have discovered that the world is full of disobedient children who do exactly the opposite of what they're told. [...] It was clear to the scientists that the only way to make these children listen was to stop telling them all the right things to do, and start telling them all the wrong things to do. Since these children do the opposite of what they're told everything works out for the best.⁷ (1990/1994, 3)

Carroll and those who follow his lead often do it through the absurd use of food. Carroll's whimsical and playful language dramatically changed the writing for children. His new relationships with 'rhyme and reason' allow the next generations of authors in many countries to pick up the baton of the absurd, develop new imagery, and carry children's nonsense even

⁷Translated from the Russian by Jane Bugaeva.

further. At any step of this way, the food absurdity is a powerful tool that moves the most ordinary into that extraordinary space where children all over the world feel themselves quite at home, although this space may differ in different cultures.

In the case of the American authors, Carl Sandburg and Norton Juster appropriated Carroll's principles of wordplay and topsy-turvy transformations, particularly in the depiction of food. Even though both of them stay in the Anglophone tradition of children's literature, the nonsensical qualities of their writings have a distinct American accent, and, for Sandburg, apparently a Midwestern one. Still, an unmistakable Carrollian spirit fills their books. In the case of Russian children's books, while Englishness is retained, it has been transported into another culture and permeates Russian writings for children, helping to celebrate the high absurd in a new home and with a new taste. Due to multiple translations of Carroll's texts and to the ease of appropriation of Carroll's themes and style, *Alice* became an essential and truly important part of Russian children's and adults' reading. Various sayings from *Alice* became proverbial, and one may guess the age of a person by what translation of 'Curiouser and curiouser!' this person quotes. This and many other quotations are now the intrinsic parts of Russian cultural codes with Lewis Carroll being appropriated as the model of the absurd and a part of the canon of Russian children's literature. Such a 'domestication' of Carroll produced multiple 'offsprings' that appropriated Carroll's ways of writing and its various elements, including numerous food images. In doing so, the appropriation of *Alice* defined the cultural codes of many generations of Russian writers and Russian readers and gave these codes an 'English' twist.

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Charles Lutwidge Dodgson in Wonderland: Lewis Carroll's Mythobiography and Contemporary Fiction

Maciej Skowera

Lewis Carroll's two books, iconic stories of children's literature, constitute a profound part of the common cultural imagination,¹ and their numerous reworkings are undoubtedly one of many reasons for this (Llompart Pons

¹'Cultural imagination,' as defined by Juliette Harrison, is a term that extends 'the concept of cultural memory into the realm of imagination and of imaginative literature. Just as certain memories of events or people survive in the cultural memory and form part of a tradition, certain stories, characters and concepts become increasingly important within the cultural imagination and become equally entrenched in an imaginative and cognitive tradition. [...] cultural imagination refers to ideas (these may be stories, or concepts, or conceptualizations) shared by a group of people; shared, but not necessarily commonly believed in' (2013, 13).

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2020, 62). From early imitations (Sigler 1997) to contemporary transmedia productions (Kérchy 2016), there are too many works based on *Alice*² to discuss them all.³ Faced with a monumental, still growing pyramid of texts (which palimpsestously overlap and relate to each other), a scholar investigating the cultural afterlife of the duology may feel as helpless and irritated as the protagonist herself when she cannot master the physiological reaction to the smell of pepper wafting through the Duchess' household.

This myriad of texts includes those that adapt not only *Alice* but also the *life* of its creator. Of course, other famous writers' biographies are an important part of culture.⁴ However, that of Carroll, or rather Charles Lutwidge Dodgson, seems to be of special fascination, probably because of the dissonance between his two images: a famous children's author and an alleged pedophile. This chapter reconstructs the elements of the discourse(s) on *Alice* and Carroll as transmitting into the collective consciousness via cultural texts, presents how those views are reimagined in selected examples of contemporary fiction, and shows how such writings are affected by the duology's reception.

Dodgson's/Carroll's book image(s) might be seen as resulting from his *mythobiography*—a multisource metanarrative consisting of discursively created beliefs about one's life, based on the facts, gossips, half-truths, common and unconfirmed courts, and popular storytelling patterns (Białobrzeska 2016, 17–18, 31, 89; Ławski 2010, 314). Mythobiographies, focused on the act of (re)production of narrative clichés about an individual, are aimed at building cognitive scripts that, in the case of writers, have an enormous impact on the perception of the texts and the shape of their adaptations and appropriations.

² Both stories are treated here as 'a dialogic, intertextual unit' (Kérchy 2016, 3) and, therefore, when two of them are referred to, the abbreviation *Alice* is used.

³ There are also too many secondary sources to reference in one paper. Apart from journal articles and singular book chapters, the most important English-language scholarly works on *Alice*'s cultural presence include, among others: the scholarly journals *The Carrollian* (formerly *Jabberwocky*) and *Knight Letter*; the books by Will Brooker (2004), Zoe Jaques and Eugene Giddens (2016), Anna Kérchy (2016), and Jan Susina (2010); a multi-authored three-volume monograph edited by Jon A. Lindseth and Allan Tannenbaum (2015); Carolyn Sigler's collection of *Alice* imitations (1997); a selection of critical voices, prepared by Robert Phillips (1971); and the annotated edition of *Alice*, edited by Martin Gardner and, later, expanded and revised by Mark Burstein (2015).

⁴ In children's literature, the examples of Hans Christian Andersen, J.M. Barrie, P.L. Travers, Roald Dahl or, more recently, J.K. Rowling can be referred to here.

‘But it’s no use now [...] to pretend to be two people! Why, there’s hardly enough of me left to make *one* respectable person!’, says Alice while rebuffing herself for crying, ‘[for] this curious child was very fond of pretending to be two people’ (Carroll 2015, 21). Martin Gardner proves that nothing indicates that Alice Pleasance Liddell, the protagonist’s real-life prototype, would do the same and juxtaposes this with the conviction that *Alice’s* author ‘was always careful to keep separate Charles Dodgson, the Oxford mathematician, and Lewis Carroll, writer of children’s books and lover of little girls’ (2015, 21). Some researchers explicitly recognize that the real name denotes just an ‘old bachelor,’ clergyman, and mathematician, and the pen name not only a writer but also ‘a heterosexual pedophile who “collected” little girls like so many dolls and who lost his stammer in their presence’ (Snider 2006).⁵ Gardner, although not as extreme in his opinion, also states that:

[Dodgson] thought the naked bodies of little girls (unlike the bodies of boys) extremely beautiful. Upon occasion he sketched or photographed them in the nude, with the mother’s permission, of course [...]. A long procession of charming little girls [...] skipped through Carroll’s life, but none ever quite took the place of his first love, Alice Liddell. (2015, xviii)

According to the scholar, ‘[t]here is no indication that Carroll was conscious of anything but the purest innocence in his relations with little girls’ (xix). Nevertheless, this did not prevent critics from making conjectures about his pedophilic tendencies. This element of his mythobiography is still present in the cultural imagination as it is reproduced by many works, from Vladimir Nabokov’s *Lolita* (1955), with Humbert Humbert being compared to Dodgson as a similar lover of ‘nymphets’ (Gardner 2015, xix), to Katie Roiphe’s *Still She Haunts Me* (2001), overtly presenting the writer as a ‘troubled deviant’ (Brooker 2004, 225). Lawrence Gasquet even states that ‘the issue of Carroll’s alleged pedophilia [...] seems [...] to be [...] at the heart of media and public attention’ (2005, 11)⁶ as much more attractive to the general public than, for example, his academic career.

⁵The conviction that Dodgson was not stuttering in the presence of children is not confirmed by reliable sources (Cohen 2015, 56).

⁶All translations, if not otherwise indicated, are made by the chapter’s author.

Evidence of Dodgson's pedophilia was primarily seen in his photographs,⁷ as is the case of Alice Pleasance's 'beggar-maid' (1858), probably her most famous portrait. Here, the girl wears white rags, with her arms exposed, legs uncovered, and a visible left nipple. The photograph is often seen as a testimony of the author's fixation with the young Liddell, and with female children in general (Taylor 2008, 430).⁸ There are two main positions regarding such pictures' interpretation. The first one, apologetic, suggests analyzing Carroll's photographs 'in the context of the Romantic and Victorian cult of the child' (Przyłuska-Urbanowicz 2014, 65). The other position, which emerged in the 1930s,⁹ is Freudian-inspired and based on the conviction that Carroll's photographs and books clearly indicate he *was* a pedophile (Klessa 2013, 146). To this day, rather as a curiosity, A.M.E. Goldschmidt's 1933 essay is often cited by subsequent Carrollian scholars (in the article, the book's protagonist is interpreted as a phallic symbol, her fall into a rabbit hole—as an equivalent of penetration, using the golden key to open the smallest door—as symbolizing coitus, etc.; see also Schilder 1938; a discussion of Carroll's alleged pedophilia is resumed in Chap. 14 of this volume).

Psychoanalytic interpretations of *Alice* have become a point of reference in multiple reworkings of Carroll's stories. For example, Chloé Germaine Buckley directly identifies Neil Gaiman's *Coraline* (2002) as an ostensible 'rewriting of *Through the Looking Glass* with a Freudian uncanny twist' (2015, 58). Also, in his 1997 fantasy short story 'Złote popołudnie' [The Golden Afternoon], Andrzej Sapkowski makes clear and mocking allusions to the said readings of the duology (2012). The inhabitants of his Wonderland talk about the strange behavior of the girl they met—Alice's equivalent—and try to explain it. The March Hare has no doubt on this matter and says:

⁷ Only six images of naked children have survived to this day (Brooker 2004, 36) and approximately a half of all Dodgson's pictures present children (Taylor 2008, 429).

⁸ Some researchers think that the 'beggar-maid' portrait should be juxtaposed with a photo taken at the same time, showing Alice in her best outfit. Both images probably formed a diptych, the meaning of which was to be based on the contrast between wealth and poverty (Taylor 2008, 430).

⁹ These two 'parties,' the apologetics and the Freudians (Leach 1999, 69–112), match two discourses on Dodgson/Carroll and Alice, proposed by Brooker: '[...] one that evolved during Carroll's lifetime, and the other with its origins in the 1930s [...]. In the first discourse, Carroll is a sainted innocent, his books are joyous nonsense and Alice is his muse. In the other, Carroll is a paedophile, his books are dark allegories, and Alice is his obsession' (2004, xv).

Her delirium has an erotic subtext. Eating cookies is a manifestation of typical children's oral fantasies, rooted in still dormant sexuality. Licking and splashing [...] is a typical pubertal behavior [...]. Here we have a subconscious desire [...] to take part in the mystery of initiation and enter the world of adults. (224)

It is no coincidence that the subject of this 'analysis' is Sapkowski's Alice, who refers both to the heroine of the duology and the *real* Alice, allegedly the subject of Dodgson's special interest. In Carroll's relationship with the girl, as often as in his photographs and books, the manifestations of inappropriately directed fascination of a sexual nature were seen.

As stated by Ewa Hearfield, '[i]nitially, all three Liddell sisters [Alice Pleasance, Lorina Charlotte, and Edith Mary] were treated in the same way, but [eventually] it was Alice who found herself in the center and it was her sympathy that he began to care most about' (2016, 80). Some of Dodgson's biographers seem to favor the opinion that, after a couple of years, he could have asked to marry her (Bakewell 1996; Cohen 1995; Douglas-Fairhurst 2015; Thomas 1996) but was rejected—not so much because of the age difference, but because of his social status, lower than that of the Liddells (Cohen 1982, 103). Gardner argues, however, that there is no evidence of Dodgson's matrimonial plans: 'We [only] know that Mrs. Liddell sensed something unusual in his attitude toward her daughter, took steps to discourage his attentions, and eventually burned all his early letters to Alice' (2015, xix).

Karoline Leach shows that much of the scholarly literature on Dodgson creates a particular palimpsest (1999). In her opinion, subsequent texts, without checking facts, refer to what was already stated (this applies to both the apologetic and Freudian sides), starting with the first biographical book, *The Life and Letters of Lewis Carroll* by the author's nephew, Stuart Dodgson Collingwood (1898). This is the case with the relationship between Carroll and Alice, which in some studies appears to express a pedophile's attitude to his victim whereas in others a transcendent feeling nourished by the poet to his muse (Klessa 2013, 147–48). Leach, on the contrary, argues that 'Dodgson's extant and aggravatingly elliptic diaries give no indication that he had any special attachment to Alice over and above his affection for the entire family' (1999, 163).

Nevertheless, rumors of his alleged feelings for Alice are present in many cultural texts, especially those that fictionalize the writer's and his friend's biographies. Roiphe's *Still She Haunts Me* is an exemplary case

(the novel is further analyzed in Chap. 14 of the present collection). Will Brooker points out that the writer, by making constant references to ‘known, verifiable, or authentic-sounding details’ (which, after all, are only the basis for a ‘creative departure’ from what can—possibly—be considered facts), tries to make the reader believe in the presented story (2004, 182). In the novel, there is indeed a mix of allusions to real documents (Carroll’s diary entries, letters, photographs, etc.) and pseudo-sources of knowledge about Dodgson and Alice (fictional but presented as equally authentic), and also to the duology itself. *Still She Haunts Me* begins with a fabricated account of Carroll’s receiving a letter (it is not known if such a message actually existed) in which Alice’s mother declares that he is no longer welcome to her home. Roiphe’s choice to include this letter in the plot can be seen as a decision based on the principle of *licentia poetica*, but—by intertwining imaginary documents with the real ones—she builds the potential reader’s belief that everything the text says is more or less true. This applies to the suggestion that the reason why Mrs. Liddell sent her message could very likely have been Carroll’s romantic relationship with her young daughter or a sexual fascination with her.

The impression is strengthened by the reflections on Dodgson’s photographs of naked children (both the real and fictional pictures) made by Dr. Hunt, Carroll’s speech therapist:

Hunt thought he should have seen the faint shadow of the naked child in the earlier series of photographs [...]. And then he realized it was even worse. He had seen it. He had seen how the girl had inspired Dodgson. He felt the love in the photographs, in the story *Alice’s Adventures*, in the confusing fall down the rabbit hole, and not known what to do with it [...]. There was something tyrannical about these images that would not allow any other way of looking. That was what horrified Hunt the most, and he could only imagine how Mrs. Liddell must have felt [...]. Hunt wished the picture did not exist [...]. He wanted to rescue Alice, to throw a blanket around her and sweep her back to the day before these photographs were taken. (Roiphe 2001, 202–04)

Hunt’s reaction does not seem to refer to the nineteenth-century approach to the photography of naked children, but to our own—as Brooker observes, this mode of interpreting the pictures ‘works only if we view the Victorians as sharing our values’ (2004, 191). Moreover, the novel ends with Dodgson delving into a hallucination caused by drug use: the book

thus reflects the popular theory, reproduced by Jefferson Airplane's 1967 song *White Rabbit*, that the author wrote *Alice's Adventures* under the influence of narcotics, which is another frequently repeated myth about Carroll (Hansen 2001, 7–9).

Roiphe—merely pretending to base the story on proven information—refers to the mythobiography of the famous writer and, at the same time, she reproduces myths. Sometimes the issue of the debate on Carroll's life is presented differently, even surprisingly—as it occurs in *Alice I Have Been* (2009) by Melanie Benjamin, displacing 'the issue of paedophilia away from Dodgson, making him honorable (if not unmoved by Alice's proto-nymphet charms) and instead assigning the predator role to Victorian art critic John Ruskin, also a real-life friend of the Liddell family, as well as an admirer of young girls' (Siemann 2012, 195–96). Interestingly, the allegations against Carroll are alluded to in the context of Alice's sister Lorina and the governess Mary Prickett (both presented as misinterpreting their relationship, including the 'beggar-maid' session), and the girls' mother (incorrectly understanding one of his letters and eventually not permitting him to enter the Liddell home).¹⁰

The story about the creation of *Alice's Adventures* has also been mythicized in the prevalent form of 'the distinctly romantic image of Carroll gently rowing from Godstow to Oxford' with the three Liddell girls (Jaques and Giddens 2016, 7). The foundations for this myth were laid by the author himself as he preceded the narrative with a poem recalling the famous 'golden afternoon' of July 4, 1862, when Dodgson told the story about Alice for the first time (Gardner 2015, 7). It is also often believed that it was entirely invented in the course of one day. However, contrary to this vision, Carroll probably did not start writing it down until November 1862; decorated with his own drawings, the manuscript entitled *Alice's Adventures Under Ground* was given to Alice by Dodgson two years later, on Christmas 1864 (Jaques and Giddens 2016, 9–10). On the copy, there was a dedication: 'A Christmas gift to a dear child in memory of a summer day' (Carroll 1886, xiii).

All of this evokes the image of an idyllic day sunk in light, yet this is another myth: although in Carroll's (and Alice's) memories the day

¹⁰According to Terrance Riley, this follows Leach's view on the writer's life (2017). Benjamin constructs a discontinuous, fragmented memoir narrative from elderly Alice's perspective, based on certain episodes from her life. The choice of the events is important in itself: some are real, while others, as in Roiphe's case, are crafted for the sake of the story.

appeared to have been sunny, meteorological reports indicate that it was cold and rainy (Brooker 2004, 6–17). This is ironically presented in Philip José Farmer's 1971 science fiction novel, *To Your Scattered Bodies Go* (2010), in which resurrected Richard Francis Burton meets adult Alice Liddell in the afterlife. After drinking alcohol, she talks about herself:

She had been born Alice Pleasance Liddell on April 25, 1852 [...]. Her father was dean of Christ Church College of Oxford [...]. She had had a happy childhood, an excellent education, and had met many famous people of her times [...]. Her husband had been Reginald Gervis Hargreaves [...]. She had three sons [...], two of whom died in the Great War of 1914–1918 [...]. [A]t the age of eighty, she was given an honorary Doctor of Letters by the American university, Columbia, because of the vital part she had played in the genesis of Mr. Dodgson's famous book [...].

'That was a golden afternoon indeed,' she said, 'despite the official meteorological report. On July 4, 1862, I was ten ... my sisters and I were wearing black shoes, white openwork socks, white cotton dresses, and hats with large brims. [...] Mr. Dodgson and Mr. Duckworth carried the picnic baskets ... we set off in our boat from Folly Bridge up the Isis, upstream for a change [...].' (57)

The narrative refers primarily to the confirmed facts of Alice's life, but also to elements of both her and Dodgson's mythobiography: Farmer's explanation of how the story could have been told by Carroll in the glow of the 'golden afternoon,' while weather reports indicated that it had rained that day, is particularly interesting.

Nevertheless, in the cultural imagination, it still appears to be a golden time of marvelous childhood. This view is reproduced, for example, in *The Other Alice* (1993), a children's picturebook by Christina Björk (text) and Inga-Karin Eriksson (illustrations). This fictionalized version of some of the events in the lives of Carroll and Alice includes an illustration showing Dodgson, Robinson Duckworth, and the three Liddells in a boat (10–11). As observed by Brooker, by starting the book with this event, Björk and Eriksson highlight its relevance to the whole story of Carroll and Alice:

The illustration, with its gorgeous details of oars gently stirring water, the pale city in the distance, and even an Edenic gathering of horses on the far bank, could have been snatched from Carroll's own sugar-coated memories of the day. That he barely mentioned the expedition in his diary of the time,

that he only connected this trip to the first telling of Wonderland in a later note, and that the weather that afternoon was less than perfect, have been omitted. The legend is prettier than the truth, so we print the legend; and Eriksson illustrates it. (2004, 10)

The potential charges of falsity of the presented vision of the 'golden afternoon' (and not only of this) were possibly to be answered by the words appearing in the book's preface:

[...] we put together OUR STORY. We can't know EXACTLY what everything was like, or just how it happened, since we weren't there. That's why our story is a 'mischmasch' of what we KNOW happened, what PROBABLY happened, and what COULD have happened. (Björk and Eriksson 1993, 8)

While the work indeed combines the real and the imaginary, its hypothetical reader may, however, assume that the events presented herein took place in the way shown on the book pages, all the more so because the illusion of the reality—as in Roiphe's book—is strengthened by numerous references to real documents and many peritexts accompanying both the verbal and pictorial narrative.

The text and the illustrations show everyday situations of the Oxford life that, as one can deduce, are supposed to be reflected in Carroll's books (for instance, Dodgson making a rabbit out of a handkerchief or Alice watching the remains of a dodo bird in a museum), but also those events whose fictionality has reached a research consensus (Dodgson not stuttering in front of girls, Alice's conversations with herself, etc.), as well as additions and concretizations of the biographical matter (the account of the 'beggar-maid' photograph's creation). The picturebook mixes various discourses about Alice, Carroll, and his work: on the one hand, the writer is presented as a wonderful companion and a man who has never harmed any girl but, on the other hand, his interest in Alice is shown as something disturbing, especially in the passages about the girl's upcoming puberty (Björk and Eriksson 1993, 13, 17). It is also worth mentioning that in *The Other Alice*, next to the table of contents, there is an image of the White Rabbit holding a piece of paper with Virginia Woolf's words about *Alice's* author; that Eriksson's illustrations are accompanied by pictures by John Tenniel, Dodgson himself, and other artists; and that there are references to psychoanalytic interpretations of Carroll's works and to *Alice's* translations. The book thus appears to be a mixture—or, as the authors

themselves want, a ‘mischmasch’—of works related to *Alice*, its creator, and his little friend. All of this is accompanied by a bibliography including Dodgson’s literary biographies—the same ones that, in Leach’s opinion, do not represent facts but various myths about Carroll and Alice.

The picturebook is therefore a perfect ‘product’ of Dodgson’s mythobiography, as well as a metonymy of the (pop)cultural approach to Carroll and Alice, an approach in which many contradictory discourses, views, and interpretations are combined. Also, in the chapter ‘One Man Who Was Really Two,’ the audience is being addressed directly: ‘You could say that Mr Dodgson was two people as well: a serious teacher of mathematics and the playful young man’ (Björk and Eriksson 1993, 21), which clearly alludes to the tradition of treating Dodgson/Carroll as two different people. However, the accusations of pedophilia (presented in similar works for adults without resistance), while not omitted, are softened here to meet the imaginary sensitivities of the hypothetical children’s audience.¹¹ This is especially evident in the book’s last part:

Some people have suggested he might have been a little strange, since he sometimes took pictures of children naked. But we have to remember that, in Victorian times, it was fashionable to have children photographed in this manner. Often the picture was then given to an artist, who would color it and add a romantic painting in the background. He would even paint wings on the children to make them look like little fairies. Just think—children could be naked in pictures, but they had to wear gloves on the beach! (87)

The nostalgic image of the ‘golden afternoon,’ intertwined with other Carrollian myths, is referred to in other works already mentioned here, though it is Sapkowski’s ‘Złote popołudnie’ that is particularly interesting in alluding to various elements of Dodgson’s mythobiography and in depicting them from an adult perspective. The title (in Polish, it literally means ‘The Golden Afternoon’), of course, refers to the poem accompanying *Alice’s Adventures* (it also precedes the text of Sapkowski’s story), and it is July 4, 1862, when the action takes place. The narrative, like *The Other Alice* (and like *Alice* itself!), can be seen as a mosaic of numerous texts and contexts: Sapkowski alludes to the Bible, literary works (by Edgar Allan Poe, C.S. Lewis, etc.), famous figures (such as William

¹¹ Also, the ‘beggar-maid’ picture is reproduced here and brightened up so much that the girl’s nipple is invisible (Björk and Eriksson 1993, 32–33), a clear signal that the book has been adapted to the cultural vision of what childhood and children’s literature ‘should’ be.

Shakespeare, William Blake, Emily Brönte, and Janis Joplin), historical events (the Black Death, St. Bartholomew's Day massacre), and even to popular cartoons. He also refers to various *Alice*'s incarnations, to Tenniel's illustrations and, in a derisive way, to numerous Polish translations of the duology—but also, and most importantly, to Dodgson's/Carroll's mythobiography.

Sapkowski treats Carroll's works and factual-imaginary life similarly to, among others, canonical fairy tales, retold in his *Witcher* novellas and novels—as 'pre-texts' that are to be de- and recontextualized and subverted (Kostecka 2014, 180–85). In this take on the duology, 'the central figure is the Cheshire Cat [...], an arrogant and authoritative narrator, aware [...] of his textual status' (Tarnogórska 2016, 60). The story's Wonderland is entered by Alice who disrupts its order just like the White Rabbit disrupted that of the original narrative. The dark fantasy world, in a manner derived from Gothic readings of Carroll (Llompарт Pons 2020, 64–69), is a place full of terror resulting mainly from the presence and actions of Queen Mab and 'Sovereigns of Hearts,' also known as *Les Coeurs*, who mercilessly kill any visitor from the empirical world who happens to enter this realm. The cat, named Chester, treats the girl he meets contemptuously, calling her an 'idiot' (Sapkowski 2012, 217) and suggesting that she overdosed on drugs. Here, the narrative clearly refers to *Alice*'s psychedelic interpretations mentioned before. Sapkowski's Wonderland can only be accessed

[...] under the influence drugs, just before death, or [...] under the influence of a fantasy filled with eroticism [...]. In the case of Miss Liddell, it is certain that she took laudanum by mistake [...]. So, Wonderland is not a dreamland where one comes to sleep on a warm afternoon. It is a narcotic mayhem, a product of a dying brain or [...] a Land of Death. (Goworek 2017, 526–27)

It is worth highlighting at this point that Sapkowski transforms not only Alice but also Dodgson himself into one of the characters: Chester enters Victorian Oxford and makes the reverend help him save the girl from Mab. Eventually, Dodgson visits the dark Wonderland and, using the vorpal sword, attacks a Bandersnatch and the queen. This also provides the reader with an opportunity to observe how the elements from Carroll's different writings are merged. All of this suggests that the story takes place

in a shared universe made of various Dodgson's storyworlds *and* of his own, real-life but fictionalized spacetime.

When it comes to the use of the author's mythobiography, probably the most important part of the story is the fragment showing a conversation between Chester the cat and *Alice's* creator himself:

'[...] you know what, dear Charles? Describe it all [...].'

He was silent. And he did not take his eyes off Alice Liddell, who squeaked joyfully, lifting her dress so that her panties were clearly visible [...].

'Writing [...],' suddenly Charles Lutwidge said [...], 'Writing is a dead art. The twentieth century is coming, and this one will be the age of images [...]. Photography is what I mean. Literature is fantasy, so it's a lie [...]. Photography never lies [...].'

'Doesn't it? [...]. Even depicting a girl on her twelfth birthday, in a rather ambiguous, far-reaching dishabille? Lying on a chaise longue in a somewhat ambiguous pose?'

'I have nnn... never shown those pictures to anyone [...]. And I will never www... will. Though I need you to know that there was such a mmm... moment when I had certain hopes [...] of financial nature regarding photography.'

I smiled [...]. He didn't know [...] [that] I saw and knew, among other things, that [...] in July 1996, four of his photographs, depicting girls aged between 11 and 13, all in romantic and exciting Victorian underwear, all in ambiguous but erotically suggestive poses, will go under the hammer at Sotheby's and will be sold for £48,500. (Sapkowski 2012, 242–45)

As Anna Goworek notes, '[a] reader familiar with the author's biography quickly captures [...] allusions' (2017, 629) to Carroll's fascination with photography of little girls and his alleged pedophilia. What is equally important is that Sapkowski deconstructs the 'golden afternoon' myth: it does not appear to be the time of great weather and pleasure, but of mortal danger to Alice's life. This Wonderland, shown as the place where the protagonist has gone after overdosing on laudanum, is clearly the *underworld*—which, interestingly, connects the whole narrative with the novel's original title. In this way, Sapkowski's story also comments on the child as an object of fantasies of adults: both children's literature scholars, using various tools of literary interpretation, and the authors, such as Dodgson/Carroll, writing stories on and for children they hypothetically dream about (Skowera 2016, 71).

Frequently, as in the cases of *The Other Alice* and 'Złote popołudnie,' the contents of a new work based on *Alice* are intertwined with common beliefs about Carroll's life and with the elements of the reception of his books. This can be clearly seen in the already mentioned books, including Farmer's novel, in which Burton, referring to the fact that in the bizarre afterlife there will be no children soon, says to Alice: 'This Reverend Dodgson friend of yours, the fellow who loved only little girls. He'll be in a frustrating situation then, won't he?' (2010, 99). Other examples include Lev Grossman's *The Magicians* (2009)—in which the fictional writer Christopher Plover is represented as sexually abusing Martin Chatwin, the boy whose adventures he described in children's books—and Alan Moore and Melinda Gebbie's graphic novel *Lost Girls* (2006)—in which Lady Fairchild's (Alice's equivalent's) childhood rape and opium abuse echo Carroll's alleged pedophilia and use of drugs.

Jan Susina rightly states that Dodgson should be recognized as 'a skillful entrepreneur who carefully cultivated and controlled his *Alice* industry' (2010, 4) which has outlived him and is still thriving today. Its history reveals a panorama of meanings accompanying the years of reflection on literature and culture—not only that for children. It is a story about how *Alice* moved away from the original context and the creator's intentions, entering into marriages with various conventions and genres, and with ideas important in a given place and time for a given audience; about *Alice*'s publication, reception, adaptations, and appropriations; about the heroine who returns constantly to prompt questions about who she is—not only as a Victorian child, but as an 'inhabitant' of culture, permanently established in our imagination. It is, too, a story about Dodgson/Carroll *himself*, a person who over the decades has gained many diverse meanings and has become an imaginative figure—a real man transformed into a *transfictional* (Saint-Gelais 2005) character that wanders through storyworlds.

But it is also a story about Alice Liddell and *her* mythobiography, which is sometimes forgotten or intentionally omitted by writers, even if they apparently try to present her point of view. This is visible in Sapkowski's 'Złote popołudnie.' The whole narrative is presented from a male point of view (Chester), there is a damsel-in-distress (Alice), and a knight-errand (Dodgson) to save her, while she herself is shown only as a narcotized and irritating 'idiot.' Alice does not have a *real* voice in the story—she is even more bounded by the androcentric narrative corset than her Carrollian counterpart was by the Victorian one (which is not an exception—Llompart Pons 2020, 69).

The real Alice was deprived of her own voice too, as she has carried the book Alice—her ‘ghostly child-companion’ (Brooker 2004, xiv)—with her whole life. This was brilliantly captured in Gavin Millar’s *Dreamchild* (1985), written by Dennis Potter. The film simultaneously reproduces and challenges numerous Carrollian myths by showing the story of childhood memories that plagued the demented 80-year-old Mrs. Hargreaves (Coral Browne) and came back with a redoubled force during her trip to the United States in 1932, the centenary of Dodgson’s birth—with iconic scenes of elderly Alice’s hallucinating about the writer (Ian Holm) and many characters from his books. This work, along with Benjamin’s *Alice I Have Been*, is special when it comes to the use of Carroll’s mythobiography in that it adopts Alice’s perspective. Anna Kérchy rightfully writes that *Dreamchild* ‘retells a familiar story from a point of view of the traditionally silenced, objectified muse, and thus grants visibility, voice, and agency to the marginalized. The doubled perspective of the little girl and old lady Alice Liddell (plus Wonderland Alice) reflects on the simultaneous maturation, continuity, and potential splitting of one’s identity’ (2016, 149).¹² Therefore, by juxtaposing the past and the present, childhood and old age, the film perfectly illustrates the ambiguity and multiplicity of perspectives on the titular ‘dreamchild,’ who cannot be reduced to the myth of eternal youth and innocence, to an immortal girl conceived as the ultimate yet phantasmagorical fetish of the Western vision of the early years of human life. This is supremely demonstrated by the uncanny, almost haunting ‘mad tea-party’ reworking, with old Alice being mocked by the characters Carroll created.

Shortly after the said trip to the United States, the real Mrs. Hargreaves reportedly told her son that she was ‘tired of being Alice in Wonderland,’ and added: ‘Does it sound ungrateful? It *is*—only I do get tired!’ (Brooker 2004, xiv).¹³ Both Carroll and Alice ‘are shadowed now by sinister twins’ (xvii) whose cultural images have become more important than the real people. Alice Pleasance Hargreaves née Liddell died in 1934, more than thirty years after Dodgson’s death in 1898, but they both still ‘exist’—and may mean more to the present day than they meant to their own era (xvii).

¹² Kérchy adds that: ‘Carroll is presented as an eternal *voyeur* constantly supervising Alice with his gaze, but this onlooker is shown to us, spectators, as he is seen through the eyes of Alice who is looking at him looking at her. Through a complex interplay between the gazer and the gaze, as the retina of the other becomes a mirror allowing self-reflective introspection, the positions of spectatorship and to-be-looked-at-ness become relativized’ (2016, 149).

¹³ Benjamin’s book begins with this quote.

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Reflecting on Wonderland: Alice's Adventures as Metatext in the Graphic Novel

Brigid Cherry

At a pivotal moment in the narrative of Bryan Talbot's graphic novel *Alice in Sunderland* (2007, 134)—just as Lewis Carroll's connections to the city are questioned, there is a complex splash panel about dreaming that echoes themes in *Through the Looking Glass* (Carroll 1871). The words accompanying the panel illustrate the ways in which *Sunderland* engages with its antecedent text:

Once upon a time in a Looking Glass world, as far away as the nearest reflection, I had a peculiar dream. I dreamt that I was a butterfly ... a butterfly dreaming of you reading a book composed of pictures and words ... and one of the pictures was of me, dreaming my dream.

Along with the accompanying illustrations, the writer and artist thus positions himself within Carroll's *Alice* storyworld. To unravel the quote is also to unravel the multiple facets of the *Sunderland* narrative: Carroll's *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* (1865) and its companion *Through the Looking Glass* ('a Looking Glass world'); the author as narrator ('I'); the

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reader as character ('you'); and the form of the graphic novel itself ('a book composed of pictures and words'). It also evokes a pair of parallel mirrors reflecting back on each other into infinity. The author dreams, he dreams a butterfly, the butterfly dreams the reader, the reader reads the graphic novel, the comic panel depicts the author, the author dreams. In coming full circle, Talbot's *Looking Glass* world is recursive. In fact, like parallel mirrors,¹ the splash panel which depicts this scenario is itself recursive, it contains at least 26 identifiable reproductions (or reflections) of itself. At least this is the sum of the reflections it is possible to count before the reduction of size renders art and vision impossible—the implication is that the pages are infinite in number. As with the *Looking Glass* world itself as described in the above quote, the page is both 'near' and 'far away.' Moreover, on the second page of the double page spread, the author is revealed as the reader looking at this infinity of pages.² Just as 'nearest' and 'far away' are one, reader and author have become one (although of course the external reader of *Sunderland* is still present). The separate identities of 'me' (author) and 'you' (reader) is questioned further as the author asks himself, has 'a butterfly [me] dreaming of you' become 'a butterfly [me] dreaming of me?' *Sunderland/Wonderland* is, then, a reflection of itself.

As this illustrates, *Alice in Sunderland* draws strongly on the *Alice* texts and their author Lewis Carroll (though it is anything but limited to the history of Carroll's connections with the city). In this quote, Talbot makes overt references to the dreams-within-dreams and questions of identity that are key tropes of *Alice in Wonderland* and *Through the Looking Glass*. Moreover, the art style that Talbot employs on these pages is that of John Tenniel's illustrations for Carroll's books. A reproduction of Tenniel's 'Sleeping Red King' from *Looking Glass* represents the dreaming 'I,' while the background uniting the frames within the splash art includes negative images of Tenniel's frog footman and Alice finding the tiny door behind the curtain from *Wonderland*, and the Walrus, the White Knight, and Queen Alice from *Looking Glass*. It is clear though that despite drawing on Carroll's text as well as Tenniel's illustrations (the quote invokes

¹Fractal geometry in which identical topologies are observed at different scales is also brought to mind, though parallel mirrors are a rather more appropriate allusion given the *Looking Glass* connection.

²It also brings to mind the transformation of M.C. Escher's *Print Gallery* (1956) in which a man in a gallery looks at a picture in which the gallery and he himself are located.

Tweedledee's speculations that the Red King is dreaming Alice who would then be nowhere if he 'left off dreaming about her'), *Alice in Sunderland* is *not* straightforwardly an adaptation. Rather, as this passage and sequence of images illustrate—and as the rendering of some Tenniel illustrations in negative connotes, it is a significant remediation of the *Alice* texts. Roger Whitson (2006, para 2) refers to it as 'a meditation,' and *Alice in Sunderland* can certainly be described in this way. But it is perhaps more pertinent to consider Talbot's work in the context of Bolter and Grusin's definition of remediation as 'the formal logic by which new media refashion prior media forms' (1999, 273). Talbot, and other prominent graphic novelists including Alan Moore, remediate the *Alice* novels, refashioning them for the 'new media' form of the graphic novel. In so doing, *Alice in Sunderland* draws on intertexts ranging from biography (Carroll's and Alice Liddle's), autobiography (Talbot's own family history), geography and history (of Sunderland), industry (shipbuilding), art (L.S. Lowry), entertainment (music hall), legend (the Lampton Worm), and much more. Furthermore, it illustrates the ways in which cultural intertexts in the graphic novel encompass the content and form of the graphic novel itself (the 'book composed of pictures and words' in the quote). In this way, the *Alice* books can be understood as metatext in the graphic novels which adapt or remediate them. It is this metatextuality that are the focus of this chapter.

It is pertinent here to discuss the background and context of *Alice* in comic book form, particularly as this relates to key areas of adaptation. The iconic status of the *Alice* books in popular culture is a context for the ways in which the characters and Wonderland storyworld work as intertexts in popular culture (the fact that the terms 'down the rabbit hole' and 'through the looking glass' have become phrases to indicate absurd or unbelievable situations in common parlance and many examples of media and fiction is strong evidence of this). Key here is Thomas Leitch's point that adaption is a subset of intertextuality: 'all adaptations are obviously intertexts, but it is much less obvious that all intertexts are adaptations' (2012, 89). The very act of invoking *Alice* can be discussed in terms of adaptation then, but it is also useful to consider remediated adaptations of *Alice* in recent comic books.

There have of course been many adaptations of the *Alice* books in many different media, and comic books and graphic novels are no exception. Leitch's (2012) account of adaptation and intertextuality is pertinent in this respect. In his critique of adaptation studies, he points out that many

kinds of intermedial adaptation, comic books included, receive less attention in the field. Nevertheless, comic book adaptations provide an interesting case study of the processes of intermedia adaptation. While Leitch critiques intermediality as inherently limited since adaptation is not the only form of intermediality (2012, 92), it is useful to discuss key examples of recent comic book adaptations of *Alice* since these illustrate the complexities of intermedial adaptation. This provides a context for the graphic novels discussed in subsequent sections of this chapter, particularly since these explore some of the remediations at play in the graphic novel, most notably intertextuality and *Alice* as metatext.

In terms of book-to-comic adaptation, *The Complete Alice in Wonderland* (Moore et al. 2009) possesses a high degree of fidelity to Carroll's original, though this is not to privilege the quality of 'fidelity' per se—as Leitch (2012, 103) asserts fidelity discourse is 'the bad object of adaptation studies.' Regardless of this, *Complete Alice* provides an interesting contrast to the comic book adaptations discussed below. The connection to Carroll's book is stressed with a 'story by' credit to Lewis Carroll, and Moore and Repion—credited as 'adapted by'—follow his text closely. But it is in terms of the art (as much a part of storytelling in the comic as the prose) that the comic book's intertextual references come to the fore. It is pertinent in this respect that Awano's artwork is in faded pastel shades and the sepia tones of Victorian photographs, and reminiscent of the Arthur Rackham illustrations of 1907 and Margaret Tarrant's for the 1916 edition. In other words, the visual style suggests homage to the period of the original and popular children's book illustration of the Victorian and Edwardian period.

In contrast, *New Alice in Wonderland* (Espinosa 2006) is a more fluid—to borrow from Hutcheon's 'system of diffusion' between prior works and later ones (2006, 171)—adaptation of the text. Although Carroll is credited with 'original story,' while Espinosa is 'adaptor and artist,' *New Alice* is not an adaptation of the Carroll text at all, or rather it adapts the Disney animated film adaptation from 1951.³ Like the film, the opening frames of the comic book depict Alice's sister reading from her book aloud. It is the

³ Disney has traditionally adapted its films as comic book tie-ins, a form of merchandising, as indeed it did with its original animated version of *Alice in Wonderland* (1951). The comic book adaptation of the 1951 film, *Walt Disney's Alice in Wonderland* (1955) was preceded by strips in Mickey Mouse Weekly (1952) covering *Wonderland*, *Looking Glass*, and then original spin-off stories, as well as a single-issue spin-off *Unbirthday Party with Alice in Wonderland* (1952).

same dry historical account that the mouse relates in chapter 3 of the book; but after swimming out of the pool of tears in Espinosa's adaptation of the film, Alice and the creatures go straight to running the caucus race. In a similar elision, the Caterpillar recites 'How Doth the Little Crocodile' (recited by Alice in chapter 2 of the book) rather than Alice reciting 'You Are Old, Father William.' The Disney film is thus the intertext in Espinosa's comic, which clearly cannot be considered a straightforward adaptation of the novel. However, this is further complicated when Espinosa cuts the sequences with characters from *Looking Glass* (Tweedledee and Tweedledum reciting 'The Walrus and the Carpenter,' and the Live Flowers), that in the Disney film were added after the caucus race and Alice in the White Rabbit's house. In cutting these sequences, *New Alice* effectively remediates the Disney film back to the original, or closer to it at least. Again, this is not to stress fidelity, but rather to illustrate Leitch's point about adaptation as an intertextual mode (2012, 103). *New Alice* adapts an adaptation. Moreover, the comic book form itself—in this case the illustration style—works as an intertext in *New Alice*. Espinosa's art is relatively minimalist with soft shading and fine linework in what is often referred to as 'Americanized' manga style. Alice is dressed in simple contemporary clothing (though still in the blue popularized by the Disney film), is drawn with expressions similar to those found in manga, and speaks in a contemporary way that includes manga comic book-style expressive utterances such as 'Gah!' and 'Nyaah!'

In turn, Alessandro Ferrari's *Disney Alice in Wonderland* (2010), an adaptation of the 2010 film, represents similar fluid intertextuality via the Tim Burton and Disney branding (the graphic novel is 'adapted from the movie by Tim Burton,' and also credits the screenwriter, Linda Woolverton, though there is no acknowledgment to Carroll) and the art. The plot closely follows the film, though condenses the story with the omission of several scenes. The comic can in part be viewed as an adaptation of the 1951 film, but it also works as a sequel with a grown-up Alice's life book-ending a return visit to Wonderland (with a country house party and a marriage proposal at the start, and the acceptance of an apprenticeship in her father's company in preference to marriage at the end), which also includes new plot material for which *Alice in Wonderland* (both film and book) is an intertext. After falling down the rabbit hole, meeting the Tweedles, the Live Flowers and the caterpillar, Alice then embarks on a quest and takes on the persona of the Beamish Boy to slay the Jabberwocky. In light of this, it is interesting that the 'Based on the screenplay' credit

acknowledges the role of screenwriting in adaptation (which Leitch discusses as another omission in adaptation studies, along with the element of performance [2012, 100]). More importantly, the artwork is not a close reproduction of the film's art design, nor is it photo-realistic. Though it retains elements that are identifiably Burtonesque (the signature curlicues, for example), the art is an impressionistic, watercolor style. And though the characters resemble those on-screen in costume and outline, they are not simply portraits of the actors or CGI characters. The Hatter, for example, has the same shock of red hair and wears the same clothing as the Hatter in the film, but is not an obvious drawing of Johnny Depp in the role. The characters and visual qualities of the comic book adaptation are distinctive to the comic book, though both film and novel remain coherent intertexts.

As these examples of multidirectional book-to-screen-to-comic adaptations illustrate, remediation is not a straightforward process. It is important then, as Leitch proposes, to problematize adaptation, especially where this takes the form of heterogeneous and hybridized intertexts.

The intermedial examples of *Alice* adaptation discussed above cross and recross medial boundaries in multiple directions. As Hutcheon states, these remediations are 'translations in the form of intersemiotic transpositions from one sign system (for example, words) to another (for example, images)' (2006, 16), but it is important to note that this is not unidirectional. Further, the source which is adapted (or remediated) is not always singular. Multiple intersemiotic transpositions can be identified in the graphic novel *Alice in Sunderland*. The complexity of the 'transcodings,' as Hutcheon (2006, 16) refers to them, makes it problematical to consider the work in terms of adaptation in the same relatively straightforward way as the comic books discussed above. While it draws on *Alice* (as with the transcoding of the dreaming Red King discussed in the introduction), *Sunderland* is not a retelling that unproblematically relocates Wonderland to Sunderland. Though this is one intended meaning of the title, the play on words is polysemic, and as such also signifies performances of *Alice* in the city, the real Alice Liddle's (and Lewis Carroll's) visits to the city, features of the city and its environs that Talbot argues are encoded in *Alice*, and discourses about Sunderland as a wonderland in its own right (a place with a rich and varied history and culture).

For example, in the opening section (4–9), a chance encounter with the White Rabbit (who is of course grasping his pocket watch and worrying about being late) leads the character of the Plebeian (this is just one

representation of the author himself—Talbot also appears in his graphic novel as the Performer and the Pilgrim, who continuing the remediation of *Alice* converses with the Mad Hatter later in the graphic novel) into the Sunderland Empire. After buying a ticket—from the knitting sheep from *Looking Glass* (in a fitting change of job from shopkeeper to ticket seller), the Plebeian is entertained by a performer in a rabbit mask attempting a recitation of the prologue from Henry V. Forgetting his lines, he removes the mask (revealing another version of Talbot, the Performer), and continues with a monologue about aging, including quotes from Woody Allen and Carroll. The direct reference to Carroll reinforces *Alice* as a key intertext (already encoded with the White Rabbit and the Sheep) alongside key figures from film and theater, Shakespeare and Allen. It thus indicates a wide range of high and middlebrow cultural intertexts that are important in understanding the medium of the graphic novel, and more importantly positions *Alice* among them. The *Alice* intertext is anchored further with the Performer quoting ‘The Walrus and the Carpenter,’ but the ‘talk of many things’ in this version is not of shoes and ships as in Carroll’s rhyme but, on the occasion of the centenary of the Sunderland Empire, the cultural geography of Sunderland in the north-east of England and the history of the theater itself. This introductory section of *Alice in Sunderland* thus positions the Plebeian in the role of Alice going not through the looking glass but into the prism of culture.

The sense of being transported into another place is also signified by a change of art style from black-and-white ink to intensely pigmented watercolor (9). This suggests a transition into a fantasy world (Wonderland),⁴ but counter to this the Performer states: ‘Our stories will revolve around our location.’ In one sense this parallels *Alice*’s Wonderland as a fantasy realm, it is neither an adaptation of *Alice*, nor a history of Sunderland, but rather is a remediation of both these things, each illuminating the other. A tension thus arises between the fictional and the factual, and this transcoding of Wonderland from imaginary place to the real world may seem contradictory. However, the stress on dreams/dreaming (or visions) and the imagination in this introduction maintain the connection between *Sunderland* and *Alice* as its key intertext. ‘I must be dreaming,’ says the Plebeian when he sees the White Rabbit, and when the Performer begins his cultural account of Sunderland he states that ‘In words and pictures,

⁴And in fact replicates the move from the real to the fantasy world as a transition from black-and-white to color in *The Wizard of Oz* (1939) film adaptation.

the alchemy of the comic medium shall conjure a vision of Sunderland in the crucible of your imagination.’ In transcoding *Alice* for the graphic novel, Wonderland is anchored in a historically and culturally rich factual account of a real place. *Alice* thus functions as a metatextual commentary on Sunderland’s connections to Carroll, the Liddle family, and the creation of the *Alice* books themselves.

James Keller (2008, 61) suggests that intertextual references can act as a ‘chorus’ or commentary (a metatext) creating and interpreting a narrative structure within the text. A literal example of Keller’s metatext can be seen in issues 6 and 11 of the comic book series *Jack of Fables* (Sturges and Willingham 2007; Willingham and Sturges 2007). Here, Alice is positioned in the role of the dramatic chorus. Willingham’s *Fables*, of which *Jack of Fables* is a spin-off, are stories about traditional fairy tale and nursery rhyme characters living in exile in Manhattan. Jack is a composite character embodying Little Jack Horner, Jack the Giant Killer, Jack Frost, and the Jacks from Jack and the Beanstalk, and Jack and Jill, which already problematizes adaption and intertext. Alice and other Wonderland characters, being from a literary source, are only introduced to the *Fables* story-world (alongside characters from the *Oz* books) in a *Jack of Fables* plot involving the censorship and burning of books. This Alice is a grown woman, and although her clothing resembles that of the Tenniel illustrations with white apron and full skirt, her dress is a bright, clear red. Although it is not unusual for Alice to be depicted in various color dresses in different editions of the book, the red here is a clear signifier of sexuality, amplified by her small waist, pert breasts, and flowing blonde hair. In this sexually stereotyped depiction, Alice is subject to the attentions of several male characters. But her demeanor is clear as she rejects their propositions; this is not just a sexist adaptation of the character. Concomitantly, this adult Alice is a questioning voice (and as such she can be counted as an extrapolation of the child Alice from the books). Her responses to Jack’s story of how he became Jack Frost are those of a critical listener. Alice questions why Jack is not cold (they are hiding on a snowy mountain top after escaping from the Bookburner) and, when he says it is because he is Jack Frost, she proclaims this a lie. As Jack tells his story, Alice gives him the side eye and frowns, and says that she still does not believe him at the end of his story. Her critique of Jack’s story echoes her early comments on Wonderland when she thinks ‘the whole thing very absurd.’ She also responds to Jack’s punning on ‘variety is the spice girls of life’—a reflection of the nonsensical word transformations in Carroll’s text—by

correcting him—as she does the Cheshire Cat about purring in the book. When his story reaches the point where the Snow Queen is pregnant and Jack doubts he is the father, Alice tells him off for being a ‘dead beat dad,’ when in a similar way she told the Hatter off for being ‘very rude.’ These instances of Alice’s critical commentary when listening to Jack’s story represent a reflection on the nature of fairy tales and paints Jack as a fantasist. Following Keller’s (2008) argument here, this is a metatextual Alice, positioned as chorus and foregrounding her own antecedent text (*Alice* as a modern fairy tale). In this role, she draws the reader away from the restrictive confines of the text (interjecting in Jack’s story and thus interrupting the flow of panels), and forces an engagement with a broader culture (fairy tale characters highlighting contemporary social narratives such as absent fathers and sexual harassment).

In locating the character of Alice in the storyworld of the traditional fairy tale, *Jack of Fables* signals the use of *Alice* as metatext. This not only enables a connection between the genres of fairy tale and children’s novel, but between both and the comic medium. When Alice takes on the role of questioner and (unwanted) narrator of Jack’s story, she positions Jack in the role of a Wonderland character that she often confronts in her journeys through Wonderland and the Looking Glass world. Jack’s tall tales are questioned, but moreover they represent a surreal and nonsensical reworking of the fairy tale just as Carroll’s characters and nonsense rhymes were in the original texts. As with Hutcheon’s contention that multiple versions of a text exist laterally, not vertically (2006, xiii), *Jack of Fables* links its Alice to the original without privileging either one over the other.

A similar relationship can be identified in *Alice in Sunderland*, where text and metatext each work to illuminate the other. *Sunderland*, while not straightforwardly adapting Carroll’s text, draws on *Alice* to comment on the history of Sunderland (and its wider environs) and the stories associated with it, and to reinterpret details of Carroll’s biography. The Plebeian’s encounters with the White Rabbit and the Performer’s quoting of ‘The Walrus and the Carpenter’ invoke *Alice* in order to provide the cultural context for the historical account of Sunderland. As the Performer tells the Plebeian what connects the Sunderland Empire to *Alice*—an adaptation of *Wonderland* entitled *You Should Have Been Here Yesterday* in 1970, the Pilgrim takes over as narrator. His narration quickly broadens out from *Alice* and its influence on the culture, to Victorian Sunderland and Carroll’s connections to the city. Further, the narrative takes features of Victorian Sunderland and, via the etymology of place names and people

who lived there, traces the history back to earlier roots, including medieval saints, the French Revolutionary War, the English Civil War, and Neolithic hunter-gatherers, among others. This provides a context in which the reader is then invited to reconsider the role of Sunderland itself as antecedent text in the story (and writing) of *Alice*. The Dodgson family connections to the city and an argument for possible local inspirations for *Alice* are set out by the Pilgrim: Carroll's first sight of a stuffed walrus, his conversation with a carpenter on the beach (where he also sketches Frederika Liddle), local place names such as Rabbit Hole Beach and Alice Well, and legends of the Lambton Worm. *Sunderland* thus questions the accepted linking of *Alice* to Oxford. The graphic novel contains interviews with local historians and references their works, thus providing research sources and substantiated argument to back up the questioning of the standardized biography. In so doing, *Wonderland* is remediated as a text about the legends and geography of Sunderland, with origin stories for following the White Rabbit down the rabbit hole, the 'Jabberwocky,' and 'The Walrus and the Carpenter,' for example. What is significant in this appropriation of *Alice* (and Carroll) is that graphic novel art forms a significant component of the discursive material.

The transcoding of Carroll's 'Jabberwocky' with respect to the Lambton Worm is a case in point. Carroll's writing of 'Jabberwocky' is referenced earlier in *Sunderland* as taking place during a family event in Whitburn in the north of Sunderland (121–25). The poem itself forms a section of *Sunderland* in pen and ink work styled after Tenniel's illustration, visually drawing *Alice* into the milieu of Sunderland. Further, the connection to Worms as folk culture of the north-east is contextualized in light of Liddle family history through an English arts and crafts intertext. This can be compared to an example of metatextuality that Keller (2008, 189) discusses in the film adaptation (2005) of *V For Vendetta* (Moore 1988–1989). Keller argues that the function of the painting Lady of Shallot by John William Waterhouse in V's Shadow Gallery⁵ is to draw attention to a particular aspect of English culture (namely, the pre-Raphaelites) that resists mass production while simultaneously providing art for the everyman. In this same ideological vein, *Sunderland* connects Carroll to particular aspects of English radicalism. The Pilgrim discusses the church of St

⁵There are many art works in V's Shadow Gallery, but other pre-Raphaelite art—including Milais's Ophelia and Burne-Jones's Wheel of Fortune—is prominently placed in the sequence.

Andrew above Roker beach, also known as the Cathedral of the Arts and Crafts Movement (108–09). The Pilgrim points out ‘the Arts and Crafts style,’ with William Morris carpets and a Burne-Jones tapestry. Carroll’s connection to this ideological position is further emphasized by references to his friendship with John Ruskin and Rossetti, and by his own illustrations for *Alice’s Adventures Under Ground* (his prototype of *Wonderland*) in the pre-Raphaelite style. Moreover, Talbot illustrates the story of the Lambton Worm (232–49) in the style of William Morris and the books produced by his Kelmscott Press. Thus, *Sunderland’s* account of the wealthy Liddle family roots is undercut by the connection to Morris’s association with the Brotherhood and by his radicalism. Significantly, Carroll is described in the terms of a radical: ‘a logical free-thinker,’ ‘rebellious,’ ‘criticising [...] establishment,’ and ‘taking a heartfelt stance against blood sports and vivisection unusual for the period’ (66). The style Talbot employs on these pages connects this account of Carroll to Morris’s socialism, support for the working class and repudiation of the bourgeoisie, and thus brings alternative ideological contexts to the writing of *Alice*.⁶

Class is a key issue in sections of *Sunderland* which discuss Carroll’s relationship with the Liddles (67–70). The Pilgrim speculates that ‘The problem is not age but wealth. Alice’s parents are aristocracy and Carroll isn’t nearly far enough up the social ladder for them to even consider him a prospective suitor’ (70). Due to this aristocratic family position, Humpty Dumpty does not need to explain the meaning of Beamish Boy (as he does ‘slithytoves’ and ‘momeraths’). Alice knows who this refers to because of her family connection to Beamish, a few miles west of Sunderland. As the Pilgrim points out (251), the Liddles are related to the first Lord Beamish who is Conyers the Wormslayer from another version of the Worm folktale, and thus a figurative slayer of the Jabberwocky. Alice Liddle is thus personally acquainted with the Beamish Boy (aligning her with the role), not to place the emphasis on regendering as it is in the Burton comic adaptation (and thus something of a feminist statement), but to point out her upper-class roots. This is significant throughout Talbot’s account of Carroll and Alice, strongly contrasting Carroll’s and the Liddles’ class, and positioning them alongside accounts of Sunderland as a city based on shipbuilding, and thus having an industrial working-class milieu.

⁶ In this ideological critique of conformity and Englishness, the Pilgrim also bemoans the loss of unique and sometimes eccentric ‘grand buildings’ of Sunderland to the bombs, the planners and ‘big business,’ replacing them with those of a ‘homogenised Britain.’

In this shifting of focus onto class, *Sunderland* also argues against the depiction of Carroll's attraction to Alice as paedophilia (115–16), arguing rather that it is a relationship based on Victorian values pertaining not only to views of childhood, but more importantly to class-based determinations of who was an acceptable candidate for marriage. By way of contrast, Alan Moore and Melinda Gebbie's *Lost Girls* (2006) shifts the focus onto sexuality and sexual abuse in its depiction of the adult lives of three fictional characters from iconic children's literature—namely, Wendy, Dorothy, and Alice. Class continues to be a significant factor: Alice is aristocratic, addressed as 'her Ladyship,' and is wealthy due to family inheritance. But this construction of identity is undermined by her transcoding as lesbian and as a writer of erotic fiction, and problematized by her relations with those of a lower class (the middle-class Wendy and the overtly lower-class Dorothy). As with *Sunderland*, the visual component functions as a significant intertext, referencing fin-de-siècle art, most notably Mucha, Wilde, and Beardsley. This remediation makes explicit the sexual symbolism and coming-of-age texts in the original stories.

Of particular interest here, is the significant foregrounding of Lady Fairchild's (Alice's) looking glass. Reflection is emphasized in the panels throughout chapter 1 (1–8). Each panel is framed with the frame of the mirror, and thus the contents of the panel are the reflection of what is occurring in Alice's bedroom. These reflections are not recursive (as they were in the splash pages of *Sunderland* discussed in the introduction), but the significant number of repetitions of the mirror frame, six per page across eight pages, emphasize the questions raised by the relationship between Alice and her creator. Each panel reproduces the carvings of women in erotic poses on the frame, each tinted a different color to change mood and tone as the reflection shows Alice masturbating and aroused by her own reflection. This encodes autoeroticism and narcissism, in the Freudian sense of investment of libido in the ego, and the final panels of the chapter depict Alice kissing her reflection and leaving a lipstick stain on the surface of the glass.

This theme is played out again when the three women go on to relate the stories of their sexual awakenings (Wendy's with the sexually precocious Pan, Dorothy's self-pleasuring during the tornado), but it is Alice's story (chapter 9, 1–7) that most tellingly links to allegations of Carroll's sexual interest in girls that Talbot disputes in *Sunderland*. Alice is sexually abused by an older friend of her father's, here named only as 'Bunny'—and thus the White Rabbit figure of *Lost Girls*, but a metatextual reading

connecting him to Carroll-as-paedophile cannot be avoided. During the abuse, Alice imagines her image in the mirror (through the looking glass) is falling (down the rabbit hole) to meet herself. But this metaphorical rabbit hole is also inside herself as 'Bunny' penetrates her with his finger: 'I fell or floated down a hole inside myself,' while her own reflection 'fell towards me ... from the hole's far end.' In what is an act of self-protection, Alice imagines her abuser's hand is her own reflection's hand. For Alice, this is not only a trauma, but a sexually liberating experience: 'cast into an inverted world where nothing made sense in the way it once did.' That she spent time in a 'sanatorium' because of it, is—as with Alice's rebuffing of men in *Jack of Fables* and Talbot's discussion of class and marriage in *Sunderland*—a critique of contemporary sex-based power relations with *Alice* as metatext.

To conclude, the examples discussed here illustrate the ways in which the comic medium specifically permits and facilitates transcoding. As Moula Evangelia (2018) argues, the graphic novel itself works on the level of self-conscious contemplative metatext. The visual and textual aesthetics of comic book art can form significant intertexts in their own right, as when Talbot and Gebbie pastiche Morris and Beardsley respectively. The significant aspect of this, however, is the way that both graphic novels, *Alice in Sunderland* and *Lost Girls*, and to a lesser extent *Jack of Fables*, encode contemporary issues, not least those of gender, in remediating the text. Further, it is worth considering Dirk Vanderbeke's observation that comic book adaptations are 'not faithful to the novel, but to [their] own reading of the novel' and 'that sequential art can ... take its position as a work of art in its own right' (2010, 109). As this discussion of the selected graphic novel adaptations of *Alice* has sought to illustrate, adaptation can contribute to the wider set of additions, discourses, and analyses of the text. They are, in this sense, archontic literature.⁷

In *Sunderland*, when the Performer asks 'What has *Alice* to do with Sunderland?' (26), the final three panels at the foot of the page encode a metatextual pulling back to reveal the Performer as a partially completed painting, with the artist Talbot working at a drawing board. In the final

⁷Space has not permitted discussion of other remediations of *Alice*, but Alan Moore's *League of Extraordinary Gentlemen* (2002–) and *Promethea* (1999–2005), Mike Carey's *The Unwritten* (2010–), Ben Dunn and Alfred Perez's *The Steam League* (2015–2016), and *Grimm Fairy Tales presents Alice in Wonderland* (2010) by Raven Gregory are also worth looking at.

frame, the Pilgrim turns to look directly at the reader, quoting *Alice* again with the iconic words ‘Curioser and curioser [...]’ This version of Talbot is closest perhaps to the dreaming ‘me’ of the splash page discussed in the introduction. This is confirmed when the final pages of the graphic novel (316–18) depict another such recursion: Talbot (painted in a photorealistic style to indicate a level as close to reality as it is possible to come on the illustrated page) wakes from *his* dream. The white rabbit is a receding image in this Talbot’s eye—three panels at the foot of the splash page and those on the next draw out from the rabbit to show Talbot’s startled expression, eyes wide and mouth forming an open ‘O.’ He has slept through a performance of *Swan Lake*, and the entirety of the narrative that precedes this moment is but a dream. Curioser and curioser, indeed, are these graphic novel adaptations of *Alice*.

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CHAPTER 6

Mad World: Disillusionment and Perceived ‘Madness’ in *Batwoman Elegy*

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The *Batwoman: Elegy* series of Greg Rucka and J.H. Williams III (2010) portrays the violent and at times surreal conflict between Batwoman and the coven leader Alice.¹ This Alice, created to be the proto-adversary of

¹The collected series *Batwoman: Elegy (Deluxe Edition)* is used here. The book collects single issues of *Detective Comics* #854–860, which were published in 2009 and 2010.

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the new Batwoman,² is a seemingly deranged young woman who is presented as a fetishized adult version of Lewis Carroll's³ heroine, dressing in neo-Victorian garb and speaking only in quotations from Carroll's Alice books. In designing this character, Rucka and Williams appear to engage in the thought experiment of creating a grown, violent, and erratic Alice figure who invokes the 'mythical energy' of Carroll's Alice (Michel Serceau, qtd, in Roche et al. 2018, 14). Their antagonist not only conjures the child heroine but also, as Linda Hutcheon states about adapted source materials, is 'directly and openly connected to recognizable other works' (2013, 21), or in this case, characters. The creative team further draws on Robert Louis Stevenson's *The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* (1886), which alongside Carroll's Alice texts, becomes intrinsic to *Elegy*'s, and thereby its characters', 'hermeneutic identity' (Hutcheon 2013, 21).

The neo-Victorian visual aspects of Rucka and William's Alice coupled with the 'mirroring' theme pervasive in the text compels the reader to consider how representations of Victorian expectations regarding female behavior reflect those of contemporary society. This is especially important as Batwoman is the first openly gay eponymous character in DC Comics. A closer look at *Elegy* encourages what Christine Ferguson articulates regarding the steam punk graphic novel: engaging with such texts serves to 'stimulate rather than impede critical thinking' about the time period (2009, 200). The depiction of Rucka and Williams' neo-Victorian antagonist as a reflection of their vigilante protagonist invites the reader to critique contemporary society's narratives surrounding loyalty and patriarchal protection, especially for women and girls. The childhood trauma

²The original Batwoman (Kathy Kane) was created as a love interest for Batman/Bruce Wayne in the 1950s in response to concerns about the content of comics and their effects on children. In *Seduction of the Innocent*, psychiatrist Fredric Wertham was particularly critical of superhero comics and what he perceived as a lack of family structure; negative, un-feminine depictions of women; and implied homosexuality in their narratives and images (1954, 190–93 and 233–37). The introduction of the first Batwoman provided not only a girlfriend to Batman and potential mother figure to his young sidekick Robin but also eventually a love interest for Robin in the form of Batwoman's niece, thereby securing the heterosexuality of both Batman and Robin. For a summary of the original Batwoman's storylines and their relationship to mid-twentieth-century feminism, see Perdígao (2018, 126–27). In later versions of Kate Kane's backstory, including the *Batwoman* television series (Dries 2019-), Bruce Wayne is Kate Kane's cousin. This relationship is a far departure from the relationship between the original Batwoman and Batman.

³Throughout this essay, Charles Lutwidge Dodgson will be referred to by his pen name, Lewis Carroll.

experienced by Alice and Batwoman's original selves, twin sisters Beth and Kate Kane, respectively, drives them to pursue different coping strategies and informs the creation of their alternate identities. The reflection imagery, which shows the similarities between the adversaries, demonstrates the long-lasting damage that can arise from the empty 'myths' about safety, devotion, and familial bonds that are continually told to children and from the similarly empty assurances that are made to adults. Such assertions recall nineteenth-century patriarchal expectations and regulations of 'deviant' female behavior in which promises of protection and 'remedies' for women resulted in wide-scale abandonment and torment. Through Alice's character design, in particular, a multifaceted social assessment is performed, one which highlights the painful closeness of Victorian societies' treatment of women who failed to conform to the 'ideal norm,' dismissing them, to some extent, as unstable or even 'mad.'⁴

Rucka and Williams' Alice is a complicated yet compelling choice for Batwoman's proto-antagonist. This Alice is a dark adult presentation of Carroll's Alice, a naïve child making her way through a bizarre and seemingly unstable world in which her concept of self is also unstable. The mental instability and adversarial role of Alice in *Elegy* are initially jarring. In their character design, Rucka and Williams pursue a 'revision' rather than an 'adaptation' of Carroll's Alice. Thomas Leitch makes the distinction between the two types of alterations, noting that adaptations 'aim to be faithful to the spirit rather than the letter of the text,' whereas 'revisions seek to alter the spirit as well' (2007, 106–07). This revision permits consideration of Carroll's Alice from a different perspective and merges that consideration with a critique of the treatment of a significant portion of Victorian women. What if Carroll's Alice had never been able to leave the other lands? What if she had to grow up in worlds with rules that contradicted those which she had been taught in her formative years? What if, when the illogical and frightening events in the other worlds occurred, Alice could not escape and spent the remainder of her childhood establishing a sense of self and security in those environments? Furthermore, what if, as she grew within Carroll's literary constructs, the worlds around her turned darker, transforming into a Gothic setting such as that in

⁴'Madness' is being employed deliberately in this essay as a link to Carroll's language in the Alice texts. The language used herein is not intended to trivialize mental health concerns. It is important to note that DC Comics has been rightfully criticized for 'offering readers spurious examples of what mental ill-health actually is' (Goodwin and Tajjudin 2016, 386).

Stevenson's *The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*? How would that Alice appear as a grown woman? Rucka and Williams suggest that she would be a childlike, aggressive, temperamental coven leader with a neo-Victorian flair and a chaotic, yet logical by Wonderland and the Looking-Glass land standards, mind. Her speech would be limited to lines from *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* (1865), *Through the Looking-Glass* (1871), and the omitted chapter 'A Wasp in a Wig,' and she would be perceived as mad in her original world. The 'madness' of a victim such as this, which recalls the 'madness' assigned to countless Victorian women, would be 'not an assertion of power, but a product of powerlessness' (Houston 2002, 310). For Rucka and Williams' Beth/Alice, this 'powerlessness' originates in her abduction by terrorists on her twelfth birthday.

Beth's upbringing following her separation from her family is not discussed in *Elegy*; however, her continued estrangement from them and their belief that she had died indicate that her childhood was a dark reality necessitating an escape. The implication is that Beth immersed herself in a bloody Wonderland as a protective strategy, arming herself with the defensive image of the murderous Alice. Beth, then, is safe and hidden. Alice navigates the mad world, the world in which little girls are abandoned and harmed, the world in which fathers and sisters (appear to) forget and move on, the world in which no one provides logical explanations for painful circumstances, the world in which no one comes to the rescue. A mad world indeed to a little girl raised on stories and mores all indicating the contrary.

When Alice first appears in *Elegy*, her almost page-length image, depicting her from head to foot, dominates the scene and gives the reader a striking initial impression. From this panel, most of the defining aspects of Alice's persona are gleaned. As Thomas Faye asserts in his work on adaptations of the *El Cid* legend, '(t)he image formulates what the text cannot show' (2018, 62); here, the image conveys the instability and incongruence of the Alice construct, details with which the written narrative never fully engages. Against the dark background and in contrast to Batwoman's bold and clearly delineated black and red attire, Alice is strikingly pale with extremely white skin, white and pastel clothing, and blonde hair ('Elegy Part 1: Agitato'). Jennifer Duggan argues that the 'costumed identities' of 'superhero orphans' can be understood 'as physical representations of psychological traumas, fragmentations made flesh,' and the same point may be applied to their foes (2016, 60). Beth's childhood trauma is evidenced in her identification with Carroll's Alice, allowing her in some way to

always identify with her child, pre-abduction self, through her cultivation of the seven-year-old protagonist. She is a thirty-two-year-old woman whose image is partially doll-like. Her clothing, which similarly recalls the period of Carroll's Alice, further emphasizes her distance from the present reality. She is dressed in fetishizing neo-Victorian ruffled outfit with a low-cut jacket fit like a corset, stockings and garter straps, high-heel laced-up boots, and at least three exposed weapons. Her wardrobe prevents the reader from separating this violent Alice from Carroll's innocent young protagonist. The fetishizing outfit visually indicates that she utilizes her sexual appeal as part of her threatening nature. She is alluring but terrifying and unapproachable. The instability of her mental state is reflected in the incompatibility of the elements of her presentation: nubile yet frightening, childlike yet mature and deadly.

The image becomes further disturbing when the doll-like aspects of Alice's face and hair are examined alongside her speech and against the contrast of her adult body and sexualized presentation. Her visage is in many ways 'more doll than girl' (Frankel 2017, 191). Both Kate and Alice have bobbed haircuts with bangs, similar in shape to the wavy haircuts that their eleven- and twelve-year-old selves don in the flashbacks ('Twenty Years Ago'). As an adult, Kate retains her natural red shade, but her hair is now straight and severe. Alice's is dyed blonde and wildly curled with straight bangs, evoking the blonde hair of porcelain dolls and Carroll's Alice as illustrated by John Tenniel.⁵ Alice's lips are painted with deep red and white make-up, creating a hyper-stylized puckered mouth; her default wide-eyed expression completes her doll-like appearance.

The instability of Alice's mind is also conveyed in her actions, which defy societal rules and expectations, and in her speech as she speaks only in quotations from Carroll's Alice texts and only in that character's dialogue. Her statements are from all over *Wonderland* and *Looking-Glass* and do not follow Carroll's script in any particular scene.⁶ The quotation mash-ups from the two novels convey a sense of mania. For example, in Alice's

⁵For examples of Tenniel's portrayal of Alice, see Carroll, *The Annotated Alice: 150th Anniversary Deluxe Edition* (2015; 15, 17, 37, 47, 77, 84, and 102).

⁶The use of quotations here arguably falls under the category of Leitch's 'neoclassic imitation' (2007, 103–05). When discussing Baz Luhrmann's *Romeo + Juliet* (1996), Leitch notes that Luhrmann's film with visual and audio elements 'pointedly at odds' with its source material 'separates the dialogue from the rest of the film' and offers an example of 'a neoclassical imitation, not of Shakespeare's play but of Shakespeare's language' (2007, 123–24).

first appearance, she quotes three scenes from *Wonderland*.⁷ In response to seeing Batwoman aggressively attempt to obtain information from a cult member about the new leader of the Religion of Crime (Alice herself), Alice exclaims:⁸

Panel 1: ‘How dreadfully **savage!**’ (Chapter VII: ‘A Mad Tea-Party’)

Panel 2: ‘You ought to be **ashamed** of yourself, a **great** girl like you to go on **crying** in this way!’ (Chapter II: ‘The Pool of Tears’)

Panel 3: ‘**Stop** this moment, I tell you!’ (Chapter II: ‘The Pool of Tears’)

Panel 4: ‘I can’t explain myself, I’m afraid, because I’m **not** myself you see.’ (‘Chapter V: Advice from a Caterpillar’)

Alice’s language here is chaotic and seemingly disconnected; however, she is taking puzzle pieces from Carroll and positioning the quotations in (nearly) sensible responses. Her speech bubbles are distinct; black background with white writing that is closer to cursive than the writing for the other human characters, who have standard white bubbles with black writing, indicating their sanity. In the flashback issues showing Beth and Kate as children, instead, the speech bubbles for both twins have the standard (sane) format, illustrating their common mindset.

When the girls are eleven, their family plans a move to Brussels. The panels in which the twins discuss impending changes depict the two facing one another in winter scarves and hats. Each panel moves in closer and the colors grow fainter so that by the end, the close-up of their faces appears as a mirror image with only the foreshadowing color of their hats (red and black for Kate, light purple and green for Beth) distinguishing them.⁹ Throughout the panels Kate voices opposition to the move; Beth responds in the middle panel: ‘We’ve got each **other**, Kate. We’ll still be together,’ and then in the final panel only Beth speaks: ‘We’ll **always** be **together** ...’ (‘Twenty Years Ago’). Their faith in their sisterly bond and assumed

⁷The chapters most quoted by Rucka and Williams’ Alice are Chapter VI ‘Pig and Pepper’ and Chapter VII ‘A Mad Tea-Party’ in *Wonderland* and Chapter I ‘Looking-Glass House’ and Chapter IX ‘Queen Alice’ in *Looking-Glass*. The consulted editions of Carroll’s works are those in *Alice in Wonderland: A Norton Critical Edition* (2013).

⁸Throughout the *Elegy* issues, words are bolded to indicate emphasis. This stylistic choice has been preserved in the selected quotations.

⁹This type of mirroring occurs frequently throughout *Elegy*. For additional examples, see Perdigão (2018, 130).

agency conveys their, and particularly Beth's, deeply rooted belief in social myths. Of course, the two girls are without agency, far too young to actively challenge decisions and actions made by adults. Beth disappears from the flashbacks upon her abduction on their twelfth birthday, but when Alice arrives it is with a corrupted version of eleven-year-old Beth's expressed desire to connect with her sister, even if in the most perverse way of seeking closeness: a reunion threatening torture and death.

Beth's presumed death motivates Kate's actions as she grows into adulthood and becomes the driving force in her life. Having been raised as the surviving daughter of a colonel, Kate works to become a defender of others and specifically cites the traumatic loss as the reason for her dedication ('Seven Years Ago' and 'Four Years Ago'). In her mid-twenties, Kate is a Cadet at the United States Military Academy at West Point and is questioned by her superior upon an accusation that she violated Article 125 of the Uniform Code of Military Justice, which bans 'unnatural carnal copulation with another person of the same or opposite sex.'¹⁰ The last panel on the second page of the scene shows a close-up of Kate's face, half in light, half in shadow, emphasizing the significance of the moment. The decision offered her, to tell the truth or hide her identity, will divide her. The side of her face in the light is almost white, possibly intended to recall her twin's stark white skin tone. Kate responds: 'Sir, All I've **ever wanted** since my mother and sister were murdered is to **serve**' ('Seven Years Ago'). She states explicitly that to deny that she is a lesbian would violate the parameters within which she agreed and *had been expected* to serve. Kate refuses to break the West Point honor code, asserting: 'A cadet shall not **lie**, cheat or steal, nor suffer others to do so' ('Seven Years Ago'). Upon removal from the academy, Kate is left with a confusing and complex void. Her actions, while technically in violation of Article 125, were not immoral; violating the Honor Code would have been. In making a moral choice, Kate loses access to the path of service in which she had excelled.

The loss is disorienting and the circumstances surrounding it produce an atmosphere of absurdity. She has lost two families now. Her refusal to lie leads to her no longer being a valued member of her military 'family,' her brotherhood and sisterhood in arms. So she connects herself to a different 'family,' one unconcerned with her sexuality, one in which she is

¹⁰Article 125 of the Uniform Code of Military Justice as it was in 2009–2010 (qtd. in Novak 2009). As indicated by Novak's article, there was a strong push to revise Article 125 at the time of *Elegy*'s publication run.

able to act independently without oversight ('Four Years Ago'). As Beth transforms into Alice and ascends to leadership in her hierarchical cult family, the Religion of Crime, so Kate transforms into Batwoman and joins a non-hierarchical family structure. In this group, she is responsible only for upholding the ideals of her new 'uniform.' As Rucka states, 'Kate's not looking for approval'; what is important is 'how Gotham and the DCU citizens view the Bat symbol alone' (Arrant 2009). Kate turns to the symbol of ultimate protective service within her city when the military fails her and finds meaning and purpose in Batwoman, as Beth finds strength and agency in Alice.¹¹

Superhero comics tend to play off each other's successful motifs and frequently draw from the same core text and character traditions.¹² What Robert Stam notes about film adaptations similarly applies to comic books, which also 'are caught up in the ongoing whirl of intertextual reference and transformation, of texts generating other texts in an endless process of recycling, transformation, and transmutation, with no clear point of origin' (2005, 31). Familiar themes such as the Jekyll and Hyde dynamic and traditional Alice and Wonderland imagery ground the *Elegy* reader and allow the connection with Carroll's Alice and popular impressions of the

¹¹ Carroll's Alice, along with Dorothy Gale from L. Frank Baum's Oz books and Wendy Darling from J.M. Barrie's Neverland books, is one of the quintessential 'lost girls' from children's stories. Dorothy was introduced in Baum's *The Wonderful World of Oz* (1900) and Wendy in Barrie's play, *Peter Pan, or the Boy Who Wouldn't Grow Up* (1904). The three (Alice, Dorothy, and Wendy) are the subjects of Alan Moore and Melinda Gebbie's erotic graphic novel *Lost Girls* (2009; initially published between 1991 and 2006). Although the discussion herein will not engage with Moore and Gebbie's depiction of Alice, the attention paid to Moore and Gebbie's work must be acknowledged when discussing a comic book Alice character designed only a few years after the publication of the final segment of *Lost Girls*.

¹² DC Comics has a history of incorporating elements of Carroll's Alice stories and fantastical worlds in its publications. Among the early adversaries for Batman is the Mad Hatter/Jarvis Tetch (Finger and Mooney *Batman* #49, October 1948); sixty years later, The Wonderland Gang appear as enemies of Batman and his allies (Dini and Nguyen *Detective Comics* #841, April 2008).

Although not appearing in *Elegy* as such, the television series *Batwoman* (Dries 2019-) refers to Alice's followers as The Wonderland Gang (Ep. 2). Alice's followers in *Elegy* are members of the Religion of Crime; she denies having a connection to the Mad Hatter/Jarvis Tetch ('Elegy Part 2: Mysterioso').

The Jekyll and Hyde motif is also popular in mainstream superhero comics. For primary examples of this theme, see McCrystal (2018, especially 240–44) and Reichstein (1998, especially 346–47).

Victorian era to be examined through the adversaries' twinship and shared trauma. It is significant that the traumatic childhood events and first disillusionment for Beth and Kate are narratively positioned on the brink of September 11, 2001, somewhere in 1999–2000. The events of 9/11 'shattered the sense of security held by many American (and indeed, Western) individuals' and '(m)any mainstream superhero comics reflected this sense of confusion, violation and dephallusization' (Smith and Goodrum 2011, 491). The depth of the twins' grossly misplaced belief in these often patriarchal, protective myths is conveyed in the aforementioned first flashback issue in the arc, situated on the eve of a mass sense of vulnerability and disillusionment.

The positioning of linear flashback scenes toward the end of *Elegy* drives the reader to reflect on and reassess the images and actions in the 'present' timeline. Laura Cecilia Caraballo makes the relevant point about sequential or proximate panels while discussing a graphic novel adaptation of Stevenson's work:

The reading process adapts to the unfolding of the narration, allowing the reader to reconstruct the story. The idea that there is a rhythm to comics also plays a part in the actualization of the narrative, implying a dynamic related to the experience of time in the perception of the image. Rhythm constitutes one of the images' structural parameters, where the notion of repetition is crucial, as well as that of periodicity (compromising the reiteration of elements or groups of elements) and structure (the mode of organization of those elements). (2018, 102)

This assessment of 'periodicity' and 'structure' can also be applied to the full narrative of a comic or graphic novel. The scenes of the twins as children conjure images from the main narrative and reframe the interactions between the adult adversaries, providing opportunities to reevaluate the similarities between them. The flashback construction and placement also allow the reader to interpret Beth and Kate's cultivation of alter egos in adulthood as logical, if extreme, ways of (re)gaining agency and self-purpose.

For each twin, the need to remedy their separation becomes the driving force in her life. Each yearns for her mirror, her reflection, her balance in the sister who is no longer there; however, their experiences subsequent to the abduction differ dramatically, which causes their 'madness' to manifest in opposition. They develop into a Jekyll and Hyde-type pairing both in

respect to each other and within themselves. Emily A. Bernhard Jackson explores the concept of twinship in Stevenson's novella, positing the influence of Victorian eugenicist Francis Galton on Stevenson's character design. Jackson notes that 'Jekyll and Hyde appear different, may be housed in different bodies, but they end up identical' (2013, 78). She further states that a 'twin may be dissimilar, but that dissimilitude simply hides similitude' (2013, 78). The uncomplicated 'sameness' of the twin sisters evidences itself most clearly in the flashbacks; their more complicated 'sameness' is revealed in the construction of their adult alter egos. In these, the sisters function as twofold Jekyll and Hyde figures with Hyde representing that which is dangerous and should remain hidden. Their personas each take on the role of the Hyde to their primary selves: Alice is the Hyde to Beth as Batwoman is to Kate. Additionally, from the heroine's perspective, Beth's Alice identity acts as the Hyde to Kate's Batwoman identity, and from Alice's skewed 'Wonderland view,' Kate's Batwoman functions reciprocally as her Hyde. Each, presumably, views her alter ego as the Jekyll to the other's alter ego, creating a complex web of perceived duality. Although each twin processed her trauma in the distinct setting in which she was raised, Batwoman and Alice are related as much as and are as similar as Kate and Beth or Jekyll and Hyde.

Having a neo-Victorian-themed madwoman be the fractured reflection, twin sister, and proto-adversary of the first eponymous queer female character in DC Comic's history is significant as it links the reader's mind to a period in which women, their sexualities, and their mental health were under great scrutiny. The associations of Victorian women with mental illness have been widely discussed as have Victorian concerns about women's sexual practices and desires (see Showalter 1980; Chauncey 1982/1983).¹³ As noted, the neo-Victorian garb and speech of Rucka and Williams' Alice press the reader to consider the treatment of Victorian women who deviated from their prescribed societal rules.

The appearance and illegal behavior of Rucka and Williams' Alice recall the image of the criminally insane, sensationalized Victorian woman, while Kate's unpermitted behavior within the military academy recalls that of

¹³ It is important also to note scholarly trends that are complicating blanket perceptions of women's sexual and social bonds and boundaries in the Victorian era (see Marcus 2007; Furneaux 2011). The design of Alice and the construct of the relationship between the twins draw on popular understandings of the Victorian period and on neo-Victorian motifs. They should not be considered attempts at accurate representations of the period.

the Victorian woman who falls outside societal expectations in her private behavior. In *Elegy*, Alice conjures the external demonstrations of what would have been perceived as 'madness' in Victorian women, Kate the internal. Again, the twins are presented as a Jekyll and Hyde pairing; however, in this instance, the dynamic functions differently. When Jekyll and Hyde figures appear in comics, they are often used as a means of not only critiquing Victorian and contemporary societal practices but also elucidating cultural anxieties (see McCrystal 2018; Reichstein 1998). In extremely binary cases, the Hyde character becomes the repository for all that is problematic, disconcerting, and repugnant, embodying all that the hero *must not* be. Within *Elegy*, however, it is primarily the patriarchal society's actions that are problematic, disconcerting, and repugnant, not the characters themselves. Although Alice's appearance and speech evoke the Victorian period, her bizarre crimes are not examples of her *acting* as a nineteenth-century villainess, but rather of her *re-acting* to trauma that is familiar to women and girls in both time periods. The Jekyll and Hyde relationship in this light presents the sisters' alter egos as different modes of coping with the failures of society and its suppression and mistreatment of women and girls.

The idealized standards for female behavior demanded Victorian women exist within strict boundaries, cultivating the image of the pure and respectable 'angel in the house' (Furneaux 2011, 768) and being 'the passive objects of male sexual desire' (Chauncey 1982/1983, 117). Those who failed to appear to embody the ideal publicly and/or privately risked being identified as mentally unsound by medical professionals. R.A. Houston asserts that such classifications of female behaviors were 'arbitrary' and that 'women were the victims of repressive doctors and asylums; the way they were defined as mentally disabled was inherently sexist' (2002, 310). Furthermore, Virginia Blain in her discussion of lesbian poets in the Victorian era notes that '(t)here is a great deal of evidence to show that attempts at medical and psychological control of all women perceived as sexually aberrant (not just lesbian women) reached extreme proportions in the mid-nineteenth century' (1999, 153). Both the female body and mind were seen as prone to a litany of maladies indicating instability and necessitating control, including hysteria, nymphomania, and depressive disorders (Groneman 1994, 349; Pegg 2009, 212).

In *Elegy*, Alice is the twin portrayed as overtly unstable; however, both twins have taken on protective personas to face the world that cast them aside (of course, donning a costume and embracing a frequently violent,

second identity are also arguably overtly unstable actions). Nevertheless, Kate as herself is portrayed as the stable twin. The despondency she experiences after her removal from the military is accompanied by ongoing bewilderment at her circumstances, aimlessness, and somewhat self-destructive tendencies ('Seven Years Ago' and 'Four Years Ago'). Her 'nonconformance' at West Point results in her exile from her chosen community. The refusal to lie and comply earned her a place outside of that fellowship. Although she does not cultivate the external Victorian elements of her twin, the language in Article 125 deems her behavior 'unnatural,' a belief shared by many authoritative voices in the Victorian era.

The Victorians believed that sexual restraint and adherence to highly differentiated gender roles were both evidence of and necessary for the continuation of the advanced level of civilization they had achieved. Lesbians, nymphomaniacs, and prostitutes—and by extension, suffragists, feminists, and the modern woman—were considered not only diseased but dangerous as well. (Groneman 1994, 356)

According to this measure, almost every action of the protagonist as well as the antagonist would have been seen as deviant and threatening to society. With such sweeping judgments of female behavior haunting the background of *Elegy*, how could the sisters perceive the world that has failed them repeatedly and yet continues to make disapproving assessments of their actions as anything but mad? Alice, through her seemingly demented demeanor, externally embodies the twins' disillusionment in the world of empty promises, false myths, and senseless regulations.

Through their alter egos, the sisters strive to become survivors rather than victims. Unwilling to be defeated by the world's painful fictions, each finds a way to thrive within the madness. Although they obtain temporary relief in their alter egos' actions, neither sister is fully content. Both continually search for something else: the loyalty and love they once had in each other. As Carroll's Alice returns from the strange world to find her sister's comforting presence upon awaking at the end of *Wonderland*, so Rucka and Williams' Alice awakens into Beth, her protected and hidden self, during the final moments with her sister. Recognition between the twins draws Alice out of her nightmarish Wonderland and allows them to fulfill for an instant the promise to be together that they made when they were children. The reunion and fleeting lucidity of Beth challenge the

validity of the structures that separated, traumatized, and abandoned the sisters.

Relying on the powerful image of Carroll's innocent Alice, Rucka and Williams present a complex, visually striking antagonist alongside an equally complex, visually striking protagonist. Through seeming 'mad' behavior, speech, and dress, Rucka and Williams' Alice functions as a multifaceted adversary for Batwoman as well as a captivating commentary on the effects of false narratives and promises offered to women and girls in both the Victorian and contemporary societies. The potential trauma and suffering caused by such societal myths are demonstrated through the relationship of the sisters and the designs of their alter egos. The life events of the twins are integral to their choice of alternate personas, which signify the depth of suffering, approach to survival, and distance from previously trusted patriarchal structures. Kate's unjust treatment by the military compels her to become Batwoman and don the symbol that she sees as 'a call to arms' ('Four Years Ago'); Beth's (assumed) brutal treatment compels her to become the criminal Alice and don the trappings of a neo-Victorian child-woman. The involved character constructs in *Elegy* reveal that the true madness in the text is not situated in Alice or her twin but rather in the world that surrounds them and continually allows for events to occur such as those that gave rise to their alter egos.

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We're All Mad Here: Alice Goes to Gotham

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DC Comics' Batman stories can be distinguished from other superhero comics by a distinct style of narrative and visual imagery that draws upon film noir, Universal horror movies, and highly sexualized fetish art. The particular and peculiar visualization of Gotham City and its inhabitants, as well as the narrative foregrounding of madness and the grotesque, is further augmented by the appropriation of characters, tropes, and imagery from Lewis Carroll's *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* (1865) and *Through the Looking Glass, and What Alice Found There* (1871). Gotham City's familiar rogues' gallery of villains not only features well-known adversaries such as the Joker, Penguin, and Scarecrow, but also villains who are direct portrayals of characters from the *Alice* stories: Alice herself, the Mad Hatter (further examined in Chap. 18 of the present collection), Tweedledum and Tweedledee, the White Rabbit, the March Hare, The Walrus and the Carpenter, The Lion and the Unicorn, and the Wonderland Gang have all wreaked havoc on the much-beleaguered fictional city. This chapter explores how Carroll's characters are used within this series of comic book stories and how they develop the themes of madness and the monstrous in a fictional world that foregrounds these two tropes in both

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its villains and its heroes. Importantly, this chapter interrogates the comic book's ambivalent attitudes to both the monstrous and madness as it flips between comic and horrific portrayals of the same characters; presents villains and monsters with empathy as well as revulsion; and, indeed, presents madness and the monstrous as traits that are as attractive and appealing as they are repellent.

Importantly, this chapter highlights how DC Comics' portrayal of madness differs from how it is portrayed in Marvel Comics' narratives. In Marvel Comics, madness is represented as actual mental illness, and the villains that suffer from it are the victims of authentic medical conditions. In DC's output, however, villains (and often heroes) suffer from a 'pantomime' madness that enables them to act as holy fools, and, as such, function as both comic and monstrous critics of society as much as they are threats to it. Marvel villains are motivated by mental illness, and the stories in which they feature are often—albeit theatrical—studies of their condition. For example, among Spiderman's antagonists, Electro suffers from an inferiority complex, the Sandman from depression, and the Vulture has something of a persecution complex; these mental conditions are portrayed as being the cause of their aberrant and villainous behavior. In contrast to this, the pantomime madness of the villains in the DC universe—particularly those in the Batman stories—functions as a license for characters to act out an aberrant villainous role within a particular plot, and thus fulfill a narrative function. Although this pantomime madness may be portrayed as an actual mental condition, such as—as will be discussed later—the Mad Hatter's obsessional behavior and narcissism, it really acts as a pretext for the character to 'play the baddie' in the story. While this may ostensibly appear superficial, this chapter argues that this pantomime madness enables the villain to take on a poetically monstrous role through which they enact and voice frustrations, criticisms, unorthodox viewpoints, and engage with issues as grand as love, despair, and envy in a Gothic, perhaps even Romantic, style.

Initially it will be useful to outline a number of the characters from Carroll's work who are utilized within the Batman mythos before embarking on a more thorough analysis. Tweedledum and Tweedledee first appeared in *Detective Comics* #74 April 1943 and have returned on numerous occasions since as villains. In some adventures they act as gang leaders and at other times act as henchmen to the Joker. Despite their continual re-occurrence they are not very interesting characters and are not used with a great deal of imagination by the Batman writers. There are

exceptions to this: they appear in *Arkham Asylum: A Serious House on a Serious Earth* (Grant Morrison and Dave McKean 1989), where they are depicted joined at the skull by some form of electric head gear. In this story they speak as one individual: Tweedledum is the voice of the right-hand side of the brain and Tweedledee speaks for the left. The White Rabbit first appeared more recently in *Batman: The Dark Knight #1* as the criminal alter-ego of Jaina Hudson, and the March Hare (Harriet) made her debut in *Detective Comics* #841. However, while entertaining in their own right, neither of these characters has contributed much to the ongoing story and they are essentially little more than second-division versions of established 'sexy-villainess' characters such as Catwoman and Poison Ivy. Alice herself appears more interestingly as a plot function rather than a true character in the Mad Hatter stories that will be discussed shortly. The Wonderland Gang, the Walrus and the Carpenter, the Lion and the Unicorn have also acted as villainous identities in the Batman stories, though one is tempted to think the comic strip is playing a sly game with the reader and mocking its own intertextuality with their inclusion. Indeed, the Batman mythos has, throughout its history, appropriated characters from both high and popular culture and recast them as villains, or draw upon for inspiration. The subtitle of *Arkham Asylum: A Serious House on a Serious Earth*, for example, is a line taken from Philip Larkin's 1955 poem 'Church Going.' This has resulted in some villainous creations and situations that have been as comic as they have been monstrous, and, to be blunt, quite absurd. Whether this absurdity is intentional or not is open to debate, but one could argue that the Batman stories are playful with their appropriations to say the very least. Despite the Batman narrative being ostensibly Gothic, dark, and solemn in tone, it does allow for moments of humor, and indeed self-satire. The inclusion of The Wonderland Gang, the Walrus and the Carpenter, the Lion and the Unicorn may be seen as a rather clumsy example of the comic books pushing the boat out a bit too far, but it is not unreasonable to suggest that these inclusions stretch our credulity for comic effect. It would not be out of the comic book's character for them to be intended as a knowing wink to the reader, ironically and self-reflectively commenting on the inherent absurdity of the Batman narrative itself, and its proclivity for raiding other cultural artifacts for characters and narrative material.

Of greater interest is the villain who identifies himself as The Mad Hatter, who first appeared in *Batman* #49 in October 1948 and was created by Bill Finger and Lew Sayre Schwartz. The Mad Hatter of Gotham

city has little to do with Carroll's character other than his name and appearance. This Hatter is the criminal identity of scientist Jervis Tetch who has an obsession with hats and utilizes mind-control devices. This character in Batman comics has undergone several revisions and re-writes since his initial appearance. Indeed, he was replaced by an alternative Hatter in *Detective Comics* # 230 (April 1956), an impostor who claimed to be Jervis Tetch, but was a thief armed with weaponized hats. The latter was himself replaced in 1981 by the return of the original. From this point the Hatter underwent a number of changes in the script and became progressively darker as did the Batman mythos as a whole.

It would be fair to say that the Mad Hatter in Batman has been generally weak, and the character has never been truly revised in the way other classic villains have been. There have been a few exceptions to this, however, and these are worthy of individual consideration. In Jeph Loeb and Tim Sals' 1994 *Batman: Legends of the Dark Knight Halloween Special* #2, in a story entitled 'Madness,' Jervis Tetch kidnaps Barbara Gordon and takes her to an abandoned mansion he has made up as Wonderland where he expects Barbara to play the role of Alice at a tea party. In the *New 52* continuity readers are given a re-worked origin story in *Batman: Dark Knight* (2013) that runs for six issues under the title 'Mad.' Created by Gregg Hurwitz and Ethan Van Sciver, this adventure starts with a back story that shows us that Jervis was a popular child and close friend with a girl called Alice. The two friends go to a Wonderland-themed amusement park where they have a perfect day together. However, as Jervis gets older, he suffers from hypogonadism; his body does not produce enough testosterone and he does not develop either physically or mentally into an adult. As time passes his behavior becomes inappropriate and infantile which results in him becoming alienated from his friend Alice. Jervis remains childish and immature and he does not connect with adults or the adult world on any real level. He isolates himself in his own version of reality where he seeks to assert and maintain control; he becomes delusional and manifests Obsessive Compulsive Disorder; he suffers from constant repetition of thoughts, ideas and images: Alice, Lewis Carroll, tea, hats, and speaking in rhyme. He perpetually quotes from Carroll's Alice books in an attempt to recapture the lost perfect day in the Wonderland amusement park. Jervis takes medication drugs in an attempt to correct his condition, which have no beneficial effect but rather cause terrible mental side effects, accelerating his symptoms rather than alleviating them. As the backstory catches up with the present of the narrative, Jervis is presented as still

obsessing over the 'perfect day' and trying to recreate it by recruiting/kidnapping a cast of individuals to play all the relevant parts in his re-enactment. However, when he goes to 'recruit' 'his' Alice he finds she has grown older and changed; she is nothing like the girl he remembers. Jervis kills her with an iron and kidnaps an alternative Alice—the girlfriend of Bruce Wayne, which causes Batman to intervene.

Other notable Hatter appearances in the Batman storyline include 'Mimsy were the Borogoves' by Brian K. Vaughan and Rick Burchett in *Detective Comics* #787 (2003). Here Jervis Tetch kidnaps his psychiatrist—Dr Jeffrey Yorkes—with assistance from other villains. Tetch wants Yorkes to see the world as he does—through the eyes of a mad monster: 'You are trying to understand madness with logic. This is not unlike searching for darkness with a torch.' He transforms Yorkes into a monstrous Jabberwock, and overall in plot terms this is a fairly predictable comic book mad-scientist-creates-a-monster story. Nevertheless, this tale riffs on and discusses madness in a whimsical and paradoxical way that plays Carroll like verbal logic games, such as the preceding quote. This particular iteration of the Hatter, it is suggested, cannot even perceive reality, such is the depth of his insanity. Such an exploration of madness is expanded upon in *Gotham Central* #20 (Ed Brubaker, August 2004) which again highlights Tetch's obsessive-compulsive behavior and highly delusional mind set. Dr Blackloch of Arkham Asylum states in this adventure that 'Jervis is obsessive-compulsive, and highly delusional. He's got an immature self-image, so he identifies more with children than adults. Oh, and he's a genius, too.' Here again we are witness to the Hatter's relentless referencing of Carroll's stories and his failure to distinguish between these novels and reality. It is this failure to distinguish between fiction and reality that is central to the more successful narratives that feature the Hatter: in these stories the character not only muddles fiction with reality, but tries to author reality itself and reshape it into his preferred narrative using the trappings of the Wonderland novels. These stories are perhaps more satisfying in that they evolve the cartoonish villain who first appeared in 1948 (reliant on hokey mind-control devices) into a far more sinister character whose mind-control is exercised through insidious psychological manipulation.

If the Mad Hatter has only been a marginal and second-rate villain in comic books, his role in TV adaptations of the Batman adventures has been more significant. In Fox Broadcasting's *Gotham* TV series (2014–19) Jervis Tetch/Mad Hatter at times rivaled the major villains such as the

Riddler and Penguin in narrative importance. In this version of Gotham history (which predates the birth of Batman as a hero), Jervis (Benedict Samuel) is obsessed with his sister Alice whom he accidentally kills in the fourth episode of Season 3 ('New Day Rising,' 2017). This killing instigates the narrative arc of the episodes that follow in which a delusional Jervis blames detective James Gordon for the murder that he himself has committed. As the story progresses, a crazed Tetch seeks to extract revenge on Gordon through a series of madcap scenes, including (in the episode 'Follow the White Rabbit') a tea party-themed kidnapping that not only recreates the Mad Hatter's Tea Party in *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*, but also recreates the villain's numerous attempts to re-enact the Mad Hatter's Tea Party in the comic books. This TV adaptation of Jervis Tetch/Mad Hatter is perhaps narratively more successful than the character in the comic books source material: darker, more convincingly obsessive, and deeply disturbing as he displays a fiendish need to manipulate others and a manic need to control individuals and the narrative of reality. In *Gotham* it is not enough for Jervis Tetch to control people and events, but he must control how others perceive events: as such, the Mad Hatter can add narcissism to his obsessional and delusional behaviors. Importantly, Tetch is not merely constructing his reality in the form of a specific narrative—the Alice novels—rather, he sees reality as a narrative over which he has control, he must be the author of that narrative. He must dictate the narrative flow of the story of his, and other people's, lives. His wish is to dictate what characters people play. Reality must bend to his will.

A very different Jervis Tetch is portrayed in 'Mad as a Hatter,' an episode of the *Batman* animated series written by Paul Dini and broadcast in 1992. In this episode Tetch/the Mad Hatter rather than Batman is the central focus of this narrative. This version of the character is far more sympathetic than the one we see in *Gotham*. Ostensibly, at least, 'Mad as a Hatter' is a gentle tale, and something of a tragic story of failed romance, or rather, a failed romantic. The episode opens with a withdrawn and socially dysfunctional scientist—Tetch—who is hopelessly besotted with a work colleague named Alice. In this story Tetch misidentifies Alice's friendliness and sociability for affection and attraction. The poor social skills of the former lead him to misread the woman's social cues and her attempts to 'friendzone' him are misinterpreted by him as confirmation that his love is returned. This episode becomes increasingly sinister as Tetch's obsession and social ineptitude escalate to the point where he projects his desires and wishes onto reality: he believes that Alice is in love

with him because he wants that to be the case. He thinks that he is entitled to Alice's affections. As the episode develops, Tetch becomes increasingly more dangerous and more delusional. His interpretations of reality are entire fictions of his own devising; indeed, 'his' Alice is as much as a fiction as anything else in his world.

'Mad as a Hatter' shares a theme with Alfred Hitchcock's *Vertigo* (1958) in that the protagonists in both texts believe themselves to be in love with someone, but they have projected a wish-fulfillment fantasy identity onto an individual who is nothing like this fantasy figure. Both Scottie in *Vertigo* and Jervis in 'Mad as a Hatter' are in love with the Madeleine/Alice they have created in their imaginations, not the actual Judy/Alice that exist in reality. Both *Vertigo* and 'Mad as a Hatter' can be seen as portrayals of narcissism. Indeed, the two narratives are about characters who mistake their lives for narratives. Scottie in *Vertigo* recruits Judy to play Madeleine and the Hatter has recruited his 'Alice' for a similar purpose. Both expect the women they have enlisted to play the parts that they have assigned them in the plots that they have devised.

Having looked at individual instances of appropriations of Carroll's characters in the Batman saga, this chapter now turns to interrogating how these uses function within the narrative. It is important to note that the Batman stories play fairly fast and loose with the Wonderland stories and characters. The Mad Hatter, the March Hare, the White Rabbit, Tweedledum and Tweedledee, various Alices, and numerous other individuals from *Wonderland* and *Looking Glass* that appear in Batman comic books have very little in common with Carroll's characters beyond their name and costume. They do however embody elements of Wonderland and the Wonderland novels: puzzles, word games, number games, illusion and delusion, rhymes and—above all—madness. The Hatter in particular seems to represent the spirit of the Wonderland novels themselves rather than being a portrayal of his namesake. Moreover, the Hatter in the comic books also enacts many of the eccentricities, peculiarities, and disturbing aspects of Carroll himself: obsessional behavior, a fixation on puzzles and rhymes, a dark playfulness, and—to say the very least—an alleged deeply unhealthy interest in young girls. Indeed, in *Arkham Asylum: A Serious House on a Serious Earth* and in Sales' 1994 *Batman: Legends of the Dark Knight Halloween Special* #2, strong implications are made that Jervis Tetch is a pedophile. In the former the Hatter states: 'That's why children [...] interest me' and 'To know them [children] is to know myself. Little girls especially. Little blonde girls [...] little shameless bitches.' At the end

of the graphic novel each villain is given a page in which he 'speaks' and delivers a monologue. In the Hatter's page he states, in an understated but nonetheless sinister way, 'I like dolls [...] especially the live ones.'

Of all the themes of the Wonderland novels and tropes of the Wonderland characters that are utilized within the Batman mythos, madness is the most prevalent. Indeed, madness is a theme that the Batman saga often engages with irrespective of whether Wonderland characters are present or not. Nearly all of Batman's adversaries are mad, Gotham itself is a mad and crazed city, and even the hero of these stories has had his sanity brought into question on occasion. Madness, even by the standards set by the Joker, is perhaps best explored and utilized within the narrative to a greater extent in *Arkham Asylum*. The central plot of this graphic novel revolves around the Batman's adversaries who are inmates of the asylum coercing the Caped Crusader to enter Arkham and confront them. It is their aim to convince the hero that he is as insane as they are, and that his true place is to be incarcerated alongside them. At the same time, a secondary plot provides a backstory that gives readers the origin of the Asylum itself in which the clinic's creator Amadeus Arkham is shown to slowly descend into madness until he begins to haunt the asylum like a ghost.

The Hatter in Batman is quite mad, but this is not a realistic madness; it is a pantomime or operatic madness. His madness is not so much a representation of mental illness *per se*, but a performance of carnival madness that is a theatrical and literary trope in which both the comic and the grotesque operate in cahoots with each other in order to achieve narrative aims. To explore this notion of operatic madness it is necessary to interrogate the relationship between the comic and the grotesque in fiction, and how this convergence of two seemingly opposing modes of writing/art are put to use in cultural product. When considering the issue, one is drawn to the work of Russian literary theorist Mikhail Bakhtin and his notions of both the Menippea and the Carnavalesque as a means of enabling this discussion. For Bakhtin, the Menippea—or Menippean satire—signifies a form of writing that appropriates the forms, styles, and tropes of many differing modes of fiction and writing and compounds them into a narrative with little regard for consistency or problems caused by conflict, contradiction, or confusion caused by this merging of styles. Bakhtin himself states that Menippean literature can be seen to be composed of '[A] wide use of inserted genres: novels letters, oratical speeches, symposia and so on [...] a mixture of prose and speech. The inserted

genres are presented at various distances from the authorial position, that is in the varying degree of parodying and objectification' (1984, 118). Bakhtin expands on his explanation to maintain that this form of writing allows the author of a text to write with a freedom that enables him/her to explore rather than dictate a truth:

The Menippea is characterised by an *extraordinary freedom of plot and philosophical invention*. The fact that the leading heroes of the Menippea are historical and legendary figures [...] presents no obstacle. Indeed, in all of world literature we could not find a genre more free than the Menippea in its invention and use of the fantastic [...] The fantastic here serves not for the positive *embodiment* of truth, but a mode for searching after the truth, provoking it, and, most important, *testing* it. (1984, 114)

We can see here that superhero comic books may be considered a form of Menippea as they quite freely jumble genres together, and in the Batman mythos we have characters that are drawn from seemingly conflicting genres: mad scientists (Hugo Strange); monsters that would be at home in horror movies (Man-Bat, Clayface, and Killer Croc); science fiction characters (Mr Freeze); fantasy wizards (Ra's al Ghul); conventional gangsters (the Falcones, Sal Maroni) in addition to the list of more 'regular' super villains. The Batman storyline also presents similar genre shifts in setting: readers and viewers are used to seeing Batman active on the film-noir-style streets of Gotham city, but it is not unknown for him to be involved in fantasy adventures in alternate realities or mythic pasts or in science fiction adventures that have taken him into space. While this may seem a rather superficial connection to the Menippea, we must also note Bakhtin's remarks regarding the Menippea's love and celebration of contradiction and ambivalence:

[It] is full of sharp contrasts and oxymoronic combinations: the virtuous heteera, the true freedom of the wise man and his servile position, the emperor who becomes a slave, moral downfalls and purifications, luxury and poverty, the noble bandit, and so forth. The Menippea loves to play with abrupt transitions and shifts, ups and downs, rises and falls, unexpected comings together of distant united things, *mésalliances* of all sorts. (1984, 118)

Gotham is a city of extremes and its inhabitants are gleefully portrayed as ambivalent and paradoxical: monstrous clowns, fiendish re-interpretations

of characters from children's books, lovable monsters, suave gangsters, and delightful psychopaths. Crucially, we must also acknowledge that Bakhtin maintains that the Menippea is dialogic in nature, a principle Robert Stam outlines as follows in *Subversive Pleasures: Bakhtin, Cultural Criticism & Film* (1989): 'Bakhtin portrays the author ideally, as a kind of democratic parliamentarian who "gives the floor" to his characters, who allows them autonomously alongside and even "in rebellion against" him, but who retains control over the overall conception of the whole' (1989, 14). We can see the Batman stories as being dialogic in that the villains are not only portrayed sympathetically, but are also given a voice and given the opportunity to give their side in conflicts. For example, in Alan Moore and Dave Gibbons' *The Killing Joke* (1987), one of the most popular graphic novels on the Dark Knight, the Joker not only speaks, but demonstrates he has a grasp of the truth regarding his nemesis and also voices his truth, challenging the hero's view of the world.

In the Batman mythos villains are licensed to see and voice the truth, or at least a truth, even if it is a dark, nihilistic one. The Joker, in particular, questions and challenges the values of the hero and thus takes the role, not just of psychotic monster, but also that of holy fool who tells the 'laughing truth.' Supplementary characters as well have their say, and this can also clash with the beliefs of the hero. In *Arkham Asylum*, one of the psychiatrists gives an assessment of the Joker's sanity that is not only sympathetic with the villain, but practically complimentary. Furthermore, this view—again—conflicts with that of the hero and illustrates that the narrative is not necessarily entirely in tune with the position and beliefs held by the protagonist:

The Joker's a special case. Some of us feel he may be beyond treatment. In fact, we're not even sure if he can properly be defined as insane. His latest claim is that he's possessed by the voodoo loa, Baron Ghede. We're beginning to think of a neurological disorder similar to Tourette's Syndrome. It's quite possible we may actually be looking at some kind of super-sanity here. A brilliant new modification of human perception more suited to urban life at the end of the Twentieth Century. Unlike you or I, the Joker seems to have no control over the sensory information he's receiving from the outside world. He can only cope with that chaotic barrage of input by going with the flow. That's why some days he's a mischievous clown, others a psychotic killer. He has no real personality. He creates himself every day. He sees himself as the lord of misrule, and the world as a theatre of the absurd. (1989, n.p.)

However, the Hatter differs from many Batman villains greatly: when he voices his truth he is not critical of reality, he does not see an alternative version of a reality that exists; he only sees what he wants to be the truth. For example, in the episode of *Gotham* in which he kills his sister by mistake, his narration of the events is an attempt to will reality into following a version of the facts that he prefers: he not only wants to believe that it was Jim Gordon that killed Alice and wants the world to believe that this is the case, but believes that if he insists enough it will *be* the case. We can examine this most effectively by analyzing those episodes in the *Gotham* TV series that precede and follow the death of Alice. In Season 3 Jervis Tetch/the Mad Hatter serves as the main villain for the initial episodes. In the third episode ('Look into My Eyes') Tetch approaches Detective Jim Gordon and asks for his help in finding his sister Alice, who, he says, has gone missing. Gordon does locate Alice, but he discovers that she is fearful of her brother and does not want to be found by him. It soon becomes apparent that there is something very wrong about the relationship between Jervis and Alice: in the climactic scene of the episode Alice rescues Gordon from Tetch, and despite her yelling 'You're evil. Leave me alone' and firing shots at him, Tetch's response is to state 'Alice I love you.' Alice's open and hostile reactions to Jervis—'Don't come near me'—are simply not accepted by Jervis. He cannot be swayed from his view that he and his sister are meant to be together and that she loves him as much as he loves her.

In the following episode Jervis demonstrates not only his capacity for delusion, but his need to believe his delusions and his aptitude for manipulation. At a reconstruction of the classic tea party he holds Alice prisoner. He keeps up a front of calm civility, while a simmering frustration slowly surfaces on his face and tone as the scene builds. His skill at self-deception and manipulation is evident as he transfers responsibility from himself to Alice, affirming he has 'forgiven' her for the wrongs he himself has committed. Subtle coercion becomes threat as he says Alice will do what he wants because she knows what price 'other people will pay if you don't.' When Gordon and his ally Bullock come to the rescue, Alice breaks free of her brother, who grabs her at the top of a gaping hole in the floor in the derelict building in which the tea party is taking place. Even now Jervis cannot face a truth he does not want: in response to his declaration 'I love you,' Alice responds 'You're insane' and either falls or throws herself down the hole to be impaled on and killed by an iron spike. Still Jervis wants

reality to follow his wishes and, unable to accept culpability for his sister's death, he screams at Gordon '*you've* killed her.'

In the fifth episode ('Anything for You') Jervis has completely rewritten events in his mind to match what he wants to be the truth. He has kidnapped another surrogate Alice, to whom he recites a monologue describing his preferred version of events, stating 'We belonged together and he killed you,' before cutting this victim's throat and writing a letter to Gordon in her blood. In the sixth episode ('Follow the White Rabbit') the Hatter stages another tea party as a trap for Gordon. Completely convinced that it was the detective who killed Alice, he recites the version of events he desires to his captive audience: 'he found my sister and turned her against me, poisoning her mind and then he killed her.' But Gordon responds with the truth 'She hated you. She told me. What you did to her as kids. She was terrified of you. Hated you. The thought of you disgusted her.' Jervis becomes more erratic as he tries to fight this truth, but Gordon continues, 'She killed herself rather than be with you. Impaled herself on a spike and died in agony because that was better than have you touch her.' Jervis' face now becomes pained in viable denial at this truth and he tries to block out a version of the events that he does not want to be the case. At this point his only option is to fly into a psychotic rage in order to stave off this reality.

Similarly, in the 'Mad as A Hatter' episode of the *Batman* animated series, the Hatter thinks that the Alice in this story loves him, not because she has expressed or indicated in any way that his feelings are returned, but because he *wants* her to love him, he thinks he *deserves* her love, he thinks he is *entitled* to her love. Although more cartoonish—both literally and figuratively—in its representation of the same conflicts displayed in *Gotham*, 'Mad as a Hatter' shows Tetch to be obsessive, deluded, and controlling.

If we consider the *Batman* comics and the scripts for the TV series as a form of Menippean writing, then we can see that the villains have a poetic role that extends beyond that of just a crazy bad guy. Despite being murderous psychopaths, albeit entertaining and charismatic ones, they have a literary function to play: that of the holy fool—or perhaps the unholy fool—who articulates opinions and ideas that challenge the world view of the hero, the narrative world of the story, and the reader/viewer. These villains subvert the hero and the adventure text from within. It would be tempting to dismiss the Mad Hatter as just a monster or a maniac baddy with no poetic function to play and whose only role in the narrative is to

commit crimes in order to give the hero something to do and thus generate a plot around an adventure storyline. However, we can maintain that his role as a monster is his poetic and narrative function. In order to clarify this point it will first be necessary to explore a further aspect of the Menippea and Bakhtinian thought: the carnivalesque.

In *Rabelais and His World* (1984), Bakhtin argues that some forms of literature employ *carnavalesque* strategies and motifs: masks, inversions, and disintegrations of boundaries that are drawn from the medieval carnival. Carnavalesque literature features—among other things—clowns, masks, monsters, and inversions in order to reveal a sacrilegious and sacred ‘Laughing Truth’ that is at odds with orthodoxy and convention. When we consider this, it would appear almost self-evident that the Batman comic books are a form of carnivalesque writing. Importantly, in the carnivalesque, monsters play a role in voicing this truth. Indeed, as Jeffrey Jerome Cohen argues, monsters in fiction are not just repulsive and repellent creatures, but also have an attractive role:

The monster is continually linked to forbidden practices, in order to normalise and to enforce. The monster also attracts. The same creatures who terrify and interdict can evoke potent escapist fantasies; the linking of monstrosity with the forbidden makes the monster all the more appealing as a temporary egress from constraint. This simultaneous repulsion and attraction at the core of the monster’s composition accounts greatly for its continued cultural popularity, for the fact that the monster seldom can be contained in a simple, binary dialectic (thesis, antithesis [...] no synthesis). We distrust and loathe the monster at the same time we envy its freedom, and perhaps its sublime despair. (2007, 212)

According to Cohen, the monster is not merely a cultural policing mechanism existing to demonstrate what we fear and to teach us what we should fear; it is simultaneously an appealing figure that enables us not only to exorcise the monstrous within us, but also to exercise that monstrosity. This is its poetic function. Despite the Mad Hatter not having the charm and charisma of many of the other villains in the comic books and the TV series (such as the Joker or Lex Luthor), he has an appeal in his monstrousness. He is socially dysfunctional, somewhat pathetic, a romantic failure, he has an appalling relationship and attitude toward women, he is physically unattractive and utterly delusional. But he is a mechanism through which we can vicariously rage at the slights we imagine have been

committed against us, even when we know we have fabricated them. He is the vicious voice of our malice and frustration when we do not get what we want, when we do not get what we deserve, when we do not get what we think we are entitled to, whether this be love, money, success, a job, or anything else we have set our hearts on. Therefore, despite the Mad Hatter being a charmless, second-fiddle villain on the streets of Gotham who has (on the whole) appeared in what many fans see as disappointing and lack luster issues of Batman comics, in the instances when writers (whether for comics or TV) have used him imaginatively and exploited the potential of this villain, they have demonstrated that the Mad Hatter can successfully serve a narrative function because of, not despite, his seeming weakness as a villain. The Mad Hatter is poetically monstrous.

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PART II

Film Adaptations



Standing in Contrast: An Examination of Conflict and Contrast in Various Adaptations of *Alice's Adventures* *in Wonderland*

Joy E. Morrow and Christopher Flavin

Cinematic adaptations of texts are often encountered by audiences before the original texts, which affects how the originals are experienced. As Frances Bonner and Jason Jacobs note, ‘For the most part we experience texts sequentially [...] and our sequence may or may not be shared. The chronology of encounter may establish a hierarchy that is individual, or socially and historically specific’ (2011, 39). Such a hierarchy can lead to new messages being introduced in the adaptations as due to story changes that supplant the original messages of the books. Imposing a singular narrative arc on Lewis Carroll’s *Alice Adventures in Wonderland* (1865) and *Through the Looking Glass* (1871) causes such radical changes to the source

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material that the films based on the two stories could also be called appropriations, more than adaptations. Each film is also situated within a specific cultural context that directly influences the ways in which the viewer is able to access the text. As William Verrone argues, appropriations are ‘the “theft” of previously available artistic works, cultural artifacts, historical data, or biographical information [...] To appropriate, is to engage in intertextuality [...] in which spectators respond to the multiple threads of texts that can inform the film adaptation’ (2011, 34–35). How those multiple threads are examined can illustrate what is prioritized in adaptations and what is overlooked in the original. Carroll’s precursor texts explore complex themes that relate to the social order and power structures of his time, but with each subsequent cinematic adaptation those themes evolved and created a series of removes from their predecessors. Whilst each adaptation has added to or modified the iconography and ideology of the original texts, the sheer number of adaptations have, in the late twentieth century and beyond, changed the ways in which viewers or readers can interpret both the adaptations and Carroll’s original narratives. This does not diminish the appeal of the novels themselves, but rather changes the interpretative framework through which they can be understood. Examining the portrayals of Alice and the Queen of Hearts and these characters’ relationship to each other illustrates an evolution of the texts’ meanings reinforcing understandings of class and gender.

The first full description of the novels’ protagonist is provided by Carroll in ‘*Alice on the Stage*’: ‘Loving first, loving and gentle; then courteous—courteous to all, high or low [...] then trustful [...] and lastly, curious’ (qtd. in Carroll and Gardner ed. 2015, 12). The Victorian writer seems to have an idealized vision of his protagonist: she is meant to be a projective ideal rather than a character, who is set against the inhabitants of a mad world. Adapters have often explored such a characterization in relation to the Queen of Hearts. Carroll himself apparently set up this juxtaposition when describing the Queen of Hearts as ‘a sort of embodiment of ungovernable passion—a blind and aimless Fury’ (qtd. in Carroll and Gardner ed. 2015, 98). To the nineteenth-century writer, she is a complete inversion of Alice’s virtues and is emblematic of the higher powers in Wonderland, the representative of a polarized and mad social order. Such a characterization is evident in the first visual adaptation of the story, Tenniel’s famous illustrations, whose details indeed both contextualize and modify the ways in which the reader can interpret the social order of Wonderland and how it relates to the world outside the text. Michael

Hancher notes for example that Tenniel depicts the Knave as carrying the official crown of St. Edwards, thus grounding the mad court of Wonderland in the English royal court (qtd. in Carroll and Gardner ed. 2015, 98). Such a detail in the illustration, which may or may not hold resonance for children, allows more mature readers to compare the royal court and the upper-classes at a time when the distinctions between the classes was popularly seen as one of the most defining characteristics of English society.

Tenniel's illustrations also add depth to the readers' interpretation of the characters in a metacontextual way: the fact that The Queen of Hearts wears a dress patterned like a queen of spades, for example, can remind them of an iconography associated with death (Carroll and Gardner ed. 2015, 98). Whether Tenniel meant to establish this association is unclear, but such a detail feeds into the Queen's identity as being a red-faced and blood-hungry monarch, who demands 'absolute authority [...] The Queen embodies threat, power and madness' (Aihong 2014, 2062). She also represents the negative extreme of subjectivity, an adult ideology incomprehensible from a child's perspective. Though Wonderland, as a projection of childhood fancy, is meant not to make sense, Carroll chose to include a hierarchy of order and power that mirrored the real world at the writer's time. On the other hand, Tenniel's illustrations established a more nuanced visual narrative that presents an alternative interpretation of Carroll's storytelling. This interpretative bifurcation of the novel encapsulates the difficulties in discriminating between the written (cognitive) and the visual (stimulative) forms of narrative. The underlying impulse in a narrative to privilege the oral or visual presentation of the text speaks directly to the modern shift in narrative generally, one in which 'The self within is shuffled through the countless stories outside, turning the story inside of us into a communicative whirlwind,' in which 'cinematic and televisual images work against definitional closure, leaving the self anchorless in the process' (Gubrium and Holstein 2008, 243). This process of disentanglement and detachment is highlighted when alternative forms of the same narrative are presented, overwriting the base narrative with the current media. Therefore, when Carroll's stories are adapted as films, the changes to the visuals express just as many messages as the changes to the text, even among readers familiar with the original texts themselves.

Britain's first film adaptation of *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* was released in 1903 by Hepworth Production Company, and was directed by Cecil M. Hepworth and Percy Stow. The focus of this film's twelve-minute runtime is devoted more to what could be done with the new medium of

cinema than with telling the original story. In comparison to film adaptations that would follow, the narrative elements characterizing Carroll's texts seem to be unrealized in the 1903 film. While the costuming does its best to represent Tenniel's illustrations, the Queen of Hearts is still obviously an ordinary and not a wondrous creation because of her flawed verisimilitude. Embodying the worst characteristics of a disconnected nobility in Carroll's text, the murderous and rage-prone Queen does not realize the audience's own fears of an uncontrollable monarch with absolute power. The full expectations on what the character should be (tyrannical, furious, and murderous) are not expressed in the new cinematic medium, which reinforces the audience's sense of separation between the original text and the adaptation.

Some of the changes to the source material in this film have affected several of the following adaptations, and arguably the most significant of them is the relationship between the Queen of Hearts and Alice. In Hepworth and Stow's version the encounter between the two characters is preceded by the following intertitle:

The Royal Procession—The Queen invites Alice to join—Alice unintentionally offends the Queen who calls the Executioner to behead her. But Alice, growing bolder, boxes his ears and in the confusion which results she awakes.

The Queen of Hearts enters the scene as ladylike, restrained, and proper. Instead of giving into multiple tantrums and threats as she does in Carroll's novel, she only has an antagonistic exchange with Alice, which has been unintentionally provoked by the latter. Even if this narrative decision was made in order to compensate for the lack of production resources and the short length of the reel, the comparative calm of the Queen makes the confrontation more personal and places her and Alice in a more traditional antagonist-protagonist relationship. While the film does not intend to disrupt the established dynamics of the narrative, the seeds for a character based on a personal conflict between the two characters are planted along with the idea that a confrontation is necessary at the end of the film.

Alice and the Queen of Hearts meet on the screen again in W.W. Young's *Alice in Wonderland*, released in 1915. In this film as well the Queen of Hearts is comparatively subdued, rapidly reversing her death sentences when the King suggests everyone should be pardoned. This representation of the monarch as quiet and not particularly belligerent against Alice is aligned with the fact that all of the Wonderland characters appear to be

less mad and hostile to Alice than in the original novel. Indeed, and considering also that Young's film is silent, the actors and actresses rather merely pantomime Carroll's prose as it appears on the intertitle cards. Such a depiction of Wonderland as a peaceful environment is further founded on the premise that Alice's journey is presented as a dream influenced by her previous experiences in the real world. Indeed, soon after the intertitle cards reading 'Things we do and things we see shortly before we fall asleep are most apt to influence our dreams,' Alice first encounters a white rabbit and then her cat Dinah on a tree (an anticipation of her encounter with the Cheshire cat), thus creating equivalents between the real world and the subsequent Wonderland scenes. When Alice later follows an anthropomorphized version of the White Rabbit, she does so with arms outstretched in a trance-like state in a cultural nod to the early-twentieth-century conceptualization of the sleepwalker or the subjects of mesmerism. The two characters walk a great distance before reaching the rabbit-hole, adding further removes from the real world into the dream world where 'out-of-the-way things happen.' This deliberate choice to locate the narrative in a dreamland cues the audience that social conventions will understandably be broken, allowing Alice to feel more equal to the Queen of Hearts when they meet. Indeed, there is no actual opposition between the queen and Alice in the 1915 version; the monarch even cheers and dances for the young girl during the croquet's game and then amicably escorts her by the arm to the Gryphon and the Mock-Turtle. Near the end of the film, there is no altercation between the queen and the young protagonist, as the latter awakens from her dream as soon as she is called to stand as a witness at the Knave of Hearts' trial. The equality established between the ruler and the ruled, between Alice and the Queen, in one sense represents the lingering concerns of the late nineteenth century and the 'New Woman' capable of creating the world to her own liking. That this is relegated to a dream sequence, and one shown as clearly distinct from the reality of the waking world, implies that the surreal world in which Alice is equal to a queen and capable is itself phantasmagorical in the culture of the time. There may be grains of truth in the dreamy world of Wonderland, but the full weight of its possibilities is not ready for the world at large.

Unlike the two previous films, the version of Alice portrayed in Bud Pollard's 1931 *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* is not a child but an attractive 19-year-old actress (Ruth Gilbert), whose portrayal of the character is therefore more adult. This Alice has class aspirations beyond the

childlike wonder normally associated with the character which are explicitly expressed in the very first scene of the film, when she recovers a fan belonging to the Duchess that has been dropped by the White Rabbit. Alice promptly opens it and struts around giggling about the fact that it belongs to a member of the aristocracy. Such a fixation with the upper class illustrates how this Alice desires upward mobility and wants to be part of the aristocratic world. Later on, when she inevitably meets the Queen of Hearts, she seems to have forgotten about the monarch's reputation of madness and her temper (as reported by the Duchess) and quickly learns to navigate her way around her. A very few moments after the two characters are introduced to each other, Alice immediately takes part in a brief dance involving all the members of the royal court. The young protagonist is briefly allowed to be an equal of the monarch's entourage. This is a realization of Alice's wish fulfillment that briefly places her at the center of the social order. As for the Queen, her temper rather seems to fixate on the King and the Duchess. Nevertheless, Alice's flattery secures pardons for all the characters in the end. The film gives voice to broader social concerns about the health of the nobility in the face of a rising middle-class post-war and the dysfunction of pre-war society in Europe, with specific references to Britain. Indeed, as Jürgen Kocka argues, 'in wealth, cultural influence, and political power, the middle class had clearly outstripped the nobility in large parts of Europe by 1914' (1995, 799). The wished-for ascendancy enjoyed by Alice when she joins the nobles at the top of the social order allows for the exploration of social and cultural roles, without compromising the story's guise as entertainment.

This is further confirmed in the subsequent establishing shot of the courtroom, which places the monarchs in a towering position over the attendees, whose spatial arrangement appears to be very formal and severe. By contrast, Alice is played as mocking the proceedings when she steals the chalk belonging to one member of the jury and loudly comments with irony upon the Dormouse's suppression. The trial scene then reveals the underlying tension of female competition centered on the Queen, Alice, and the Duchess. The Queen announces to the court that she believes the Duchess is involved in the crime based on the note presented as evidence. The Knave declares that he would not steal the tarts for the ugly Duchess but for the beautiful Alice, who is overtly pleased by the compliment. The Duchess, out of love, refuses to confess who really stole the tarts for her. Then the White Rabbit comes forward and confesses being the lover of the Duchess and declares his intention to marry her. After this happy

revelation, Alice angrily cries out, 'Nothing of the sort! I will not permit it!'—a line causing pandemonium to break out. All the more defiantly she then affirms, 'Come on all of you! Who's afraid of a pack of cards?' Contrary to the 1903 film, where Alice accidentally offends the queen and her entourage, the 1931 Alice does so intentionally. She wants to enforce her own order in the world of Wonderland. The protagonist of Pollard's film thus apparently embodies the hostility against subordinate positions and the wish to become a queen herself that characterizes her figure in Carroll's sequel *Through the Looking Glass* (Little 1976, 200). The protagonist wakes from her exploratory fantasy only when she thinks she has been thwarted in achieving her goal to have power and an equal role with the nobility. The trial sequence illustrates how much the external and traditional social order is embedded in the fabric of this adaptation. Particularly, as Sarah Street argues in her book on the history of British cinema (which focuses on the significance of class and gender portrayals in film storytelling), in the first half of the twentieth century, the establishment and reinforcement of normalcy through the media, in both print and the nascent film industry, presents itself as a complement to the established order of the day rather than as a challenge to it (1997). The 1931 Alice presents both the fantastical nature of the challenge to the established order and the growing tensions experienced by those individuals who feel outside the established power hierarchy. Alice can indulge in fantasies of power but seems to realize that it cannot progress beyond mere wish-fulfillment.

On the contrary, in Norman McLeod's 1933 cinematic version Alice is portrayed as an inquisitive child. McLeod's film remains firmly grounded in the specific cultural expectations for the 'idyllic child' protagonist, whose social grounding is established in the scene near the film's beginning when Alice tells her nanny that she can see a white rabbit in a waistcoat running late outside. The young child is immediately reprimanded for telling 'untruths' and is told to settle down and set herself to the lady-like task of sewing. Much of the film's narrative follows the established order of the source material as Alice eventually makes her way to the garden of the Queen of Hearts. The latter is generally cranky toward everyone and calls for their heads, though, as in the book, the King manages not to enforce his wife's demands for executions. However, unlike the original book, the 1933 queen is not intimidating at all, but she is portrayed as weak and nonthreatening, she is easily frightened by the Gryphon and promptly abandons the scene running away.

This film (which is also examined in Chap. 18) covers both the *Alice* books and ends with Alice forcing her way into a banquet in her royal honor after she has reached the Queen square. During the banquet, all the characters that Alice has met over the course of her adventures are present, with the exception of the Queen of Hearts, who has simply disappeared from the narrative after being frightened by the Gryphon. The dismissal of the Queen of Hearts is apparently a departure from the narrative trends of the previous cinematic adaptations, which end with a confrontation between Alice and the (aggressive) monarch. McLeod's film instead focuses on the confrontation between Alice and the Red Queen, which ends the journey (and dream) of the protagonist in Carroll's sequel novel after Alice catches and shakes her until she transforms into the real-world kitten the girl was playing with at the beginning of the book (Carroll 2015, 314–15). The 1933 film inverts the original narrative by having the Red Queen attack and throttle Alice instead. This change and the limited presence of the Queen of Hearts, who is often used as the antagonist in *Alice* adaptations, opens McLeod's film to an examination of how Alice represents the social role of rebellious child who needs to conform to societal behavioral expectations. The fact that it is the Red Queen—the physical enforcement of social hierarchy—who throttles the protagonist suggests that, independently of her achievements in life, Alice is punished for trying to move outside her assigned social position. After this moment, the girl awakens and has to return to her sewing and accomplish what she is expected to do.

The return to social stability and the abandonment of improper social mobility reinforces what Jack Zipes sees as the broader cultural application of children literature and fairy tales, as cautionary or norming devices which serve to reinforce the social norms through contrast (Zipes 1988, 23–24). The reinforcement of expectations of proper class and gender boundaries and social standing, as well as the contrasts between the social freedoms of the nobles and of commoners such as Alice, are specific to the place and time of the film. The audience of the time thought themselves the natural inheritors of the Victorian social order which Carroll presents in his text, although the social shifts between the original novel and the 1933 adaptation render the desire for the established norms more of a Propopian absence than a reality (Propp 1968, 101–103). This locates McLeod's film in a discrete social and cultural milieu, which presents itself as a return to the original source material rather than as participating in an ongoing cinematic narrative tradition it builds deliberately on.

The 1951 animated Disney film emphasizes the cinematic, rather than textual, traditions of *Alice* by embracing a more visual and less textual interpretation of the source material and its cultural resonances. When establishing the style for the film, David Hall's proposed animation was inspired by Tenniel's artwork. However, the company chose to pursue an animation style which was closer to the surrealism of earlier film adaptations and opted to pursue the softer and less surreal visual style of animator Mary Blair. Alice is drawn more realistically than the world and the fantastic characters around her, standing out as a point of reference for the audience toward the real, the safe, and the known rather than as a willing participant in the fantasy of Wonderland. Unlike her counterpart in the book, the young protagonist in Disney's film does not suffer any identity crisis and has only a few doubts about her identity when she meets the Caterpillar, presenting Alice as having a sentiment about social status and self-sufficiency. This self-sufficiency marks Alice as primarily an individual character instead of a representative member of a broader society.

In the Disney adaptation the Queen of Hearts is depicted as a more terrifying villain who is easily angered and kills on a whim. At the same time, she is also buffoonish and has the personality of an angry toddler trapped in the body of a powerful ruler before whom everyone trembles. Viewers are meant to be amused by the Queen of Hearts, and she represents the audience's own movement toward the diminishment and rejection of aristocratic rule. She is introduced to Alice at the beginning of the third act as an *antagonist ex-machina*. The young child meets her after tearfully realizing that her wished-for world is not what she truly wanted. Alice's confrontation with the Queen reinforces the narrative expectations of the filmmakers and the audience established by Disney's *Snow White and the Seven Dwarves* (1937) and *Cinderella* (1950), and followed in *Peter Pan* (1953), by providing a traditional hero vs. villain climax and resolution. Simultaneously, it also imposes a clear moral message on the story, because the conflict between the two characters further reinforces the lesson the young protagonist has to learn about her wish-fulfillment as well as it rewards her for being a good character.

The Disney film gained a following throughout the 1960s and subsequent adaptations of Carroll's texts began to be compared not only to the source materials but to it. An exception to this tendency is the film-musical version of *Alice in Wonderland* directed by William Sterling and released by Joseph Shafel Productions in 1972 to moderate success. This film's protagonist is meant to be Alice Liddell drifting off to sleep while listening

to Charles Dodgson telling the first, oral version of the story. Beyond bookending the film, such an addition does not significantly impact the plot; however, and contrary to earlier adaptations, it further grounds the parallels between Wonderland and the real world. Narratively, Alice as a character is more subdued, whimsically enjoying the wondrous world around her, yet she only stares at it all, as if she is distant, which emphasizes her dream state and oneiric experience. The Queen of Hearts does not play a prominent role in the musical. Alice stumbles into the royal garden and apparently enjoys the parade of suits, a procession that ends with the entrance of the Knave, the King, and the Queen of Hearts. The monarchs play tug of war with the crown and the Queen wins. She carries herself as if she was above those over whom she rules, fulfilling possible audience expectations on her role as an aristocratic, unreachable being—expectations that are nevertheless promptly subverted through the representation of her power's impotence when both the King and Alice undo her calls for executions.

The class conflict in the 1972 film is therefore not based upon an antagonistic, personal confrontation between the Queen and Alice, but rather between the young girl and the social system of Wonderland, as the sequence of the trial demonstrates. As Carroll's book recounts near the end of the story, 'the whole pack [of cards] rose up into the air, and come flying down upon her; she gave a little scream, half of fright and half of anger, and tried to beat them off, and found herself lying on the bank' (2015, 145). Sterling's Alice instead wakes up after being taunted by the members of the court. In the trial scene the protagonist cowers in a corner, despite having grown larger than the residents of Wonderland. The camera cuts back and forth between Alice and a series of distorted medium shots of the crowd hurling insults at her. The established social order is reinforced through the court's triumph over Alice: after the Queen orders her execution, the entire court asks for Alice's head. The 1972 Alice thus illustrates how ingrained the concept of insurmountable social order is to this version of the character, which is surprising considering the time when this film was made. The 1960s and 1970s were indeed a time of great ideological change in the Western world. Sexual revolution and the affirmation of free will were on the rise and postmodernism was taking root, but the creators of this film chose to echo the more traditional Victorian values of social hierarchy.

Subsequent interpretations of the Alice books in the cinematic medium began rejecting the reinforcement of social norms in favor of explicitly

postmodern interpretations of both the narrative structure and the representation of the characters. In 2010 and 2016 Disney studio released Tim Burton's *Alice in Wonderland* and James Bobin's *Through the Looking-Glass*, both of whom are tenuously tied to the original texts in their plots and in the depiction of the characters. As Kamilla Elliot argues, in fact, Burton's film rather 'adopts other narrative structures, like the *bildungsroman*, the anti-Cinderella story, and the mythological hero plot, in which an outsider comes from another world, rescues a community, and returns to the other world' (2010, 195). Such a muddling of genres adds even more distance from the source materials. Alice and the Red Queen have a personal protagonist-antagonist relationship, evidenced from the monarch's first apparition, when she asks her soldiers to look for the human girl who, a prophecy states, will bring an end to her tyrannical reign of terror. Although this film does not represent the Queen of Hearts, the character of the Red Queen clearly alludes to the former monarch as well. Indeed, her soldiers are playing cards, her catchphrase is 'off with their heads,' and hearts are incorporated into her character design. Visually, the Red Queen is therefore meant to be read as the Queen of Hearts as well. She is deadly, and (because of an accident caused by her sister, the White Queen, as viewers discover in Bobin's sequel) she is deformed, her head being out of proportion with her body, which some characters cite as the source of her decapitation obsession. Bobin's 2016 sequel (which is the focus of Chap. 10 too in this volume) attempts to excuse the bloodshed and abuse of the Red Queen by depicting her disfigurement as a justification for her choices, then reforms her after she receives her sister's heartfelt apology. This attempt at a redemption arc depicts the character's journey in the two films as more personal, leading spectators to finally see her as a sister, more than a Queen. While seemingly a minor shift in the social relationships of the characters, the cinematic duology encourages viewers to redefine the cultural dynamics of the source material in light of their own (modern and postmodern) engagement with the changing nature of class and gender dynamics.

Such a highly individualistic arc is mirrored in these films' interpretations of Alice as well. In Burton's film, she grows beyond the limitations and strictures of Victorian society in order to become the Chosen One of Wonderland. This change in her character represents both a degree of wish-fulfillment not realized in earlier films and a shift in the social milieu after the social upheavals of the late twentieth century. The feminine hero, the obsequious supergirl trope comes fully to the fore and carries its

consequences beyond the dream sequence. As the hero, she puts on an armor, takes up a sword, succeeds in her quest, and then returns home with the lessons she has learned in Underland to break out of the restraints placed on her by Victorian society, which would want her to be confined to the submissive role of wife. Similarly, at the beginning of the 2016 film, Alice is the captain of a commercial vessel, wears a sailor's uniform, brandishes a cutlass, and manages to escape from the pirates' attack. From the very first sequence of Bobin's film, she is portrayed as an independent woman determined to rock the societal establishment. Later in the film, she further affirms her own independence and her will not be subjugated by a chauvinistic, patriarchal culture. This attempt to overtly construct Alice as a feminist icon could be motivated by Disney Studio's tendency to proudly hold up its heroines as role-models for young girls. The characterization of Alice indeed reflects a growing trend in the live-action remakes of the studio's animated classics, such as *Cinderella* (2015), *Beauty and the Beast* (2017), and *Aladdin* (2019), which evolves underdeveloped female characters into examples of empowered womanhood. In Burton's and Bobin's films much of the protagonist's central conflict against the other characters derives from her being a woman with a twenty-first-century understanding of the world that is superimposed on the nineteenth century's, her most defining attribute being her progressive- or transgressive-ness against the social structures of her world. The two films present a modern idea of the ideal heroine as a progressive and independent woman, thus acknowledging the influences of postmodern feminism and ideological fetishism of the self in the society addressed by the film.

The flexibility with which Carroll's narrative has been adapted and reappropriated in film to express changes in social and political awareness of issues such as class and gender mirrors changing understandings of film as a discrete medium with cultural merit. As Verrone notes, 'The idea of film as an inferior art to serious literature has become less arguable, if only because the majority of people from around the world can view and relate to a film, whereas they may not be able to read and relate to James Joyce's *Ulysses*, for example' (2011, 15). The cinematic adaptations of Carroll's works have in many ways supplanted the original texts in establishing how the audience defines the narrative as more and more people's first introduction to them comes through films. Carroll's novels illustrate the non-sense of the real world, which partly accounts for the durability and appeal of the narrative for over 150 years and the relevance of its themes to audiences across time. On the other hand, the cinematic viewers' perception of

thematic concerns such as the role of the child and of women in society is affected by how adaptations choose to portray those elements. The texts themselves have become culturally mobile, losing their chronological grounding and therefore the social and cultural matrices which located their adaptive potential for the audience; therefore, the ways the texts are interpreted also continue to change, which adds a sense of loss to the original texts. In the Bahktinian sense, every reimagining, adaptation, or reinterpretation adds a remove from the original source material. How individuals encounter Carroll's works shapes their understanding of the texts, yet, in its narratological sense, the sense of the chronology of these encounters is disrupted by the viewers' inability to process the implied messages of the originals texts and the derivative films, because of their absence of clear temporality. Carroll's work is not unique in its atemporality as this lack of synchronicity is a 'device in children's fiction, acquiring a special significance, since the iterative reflects a child's perception of time as cyclical, non-linear, where recurrent events and routines—Christmas, summer holidays, birthdays—emphasize the eternal cycle rather than the linear flow of time' (Nikolajeva 2003, 13). This both enhances the sense of enchantment, as illustrated by Bruno Bettelheim's study of the fairy tale, and creates an environment in which the narrative is ripe for adaptation and appropriation as it is not as temporally bound as 'adult' narratives. The text thus becomes not linear and chronological but essentially rhizomatic, with each new iteration claiming to be a direct offshoot supplanting the original for the viewer or reader by creating a mapwork of nodes and connections that are often masked by the specific features of the current iteration (Deleuze and Guattari 1987, 21). Each encounter with a new iteration layers onto the previous ones, so that the viewers will bring their understandings of whichever version they encountered first and impose its messages and conflicts on other iterations. In this respect, Carroll's original message about class and gender conflict might be lost when the readers frame the original novel through the parameters set by whatever adaptation they encountered first.

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Alice Gets Mathematical: Carroll, Disney, and *Donald in Mathmagic Land*

Martin F. Norden

In 1959, the Walt Disney Company produced a film widely regarded as one of the most effective mathematics teaching tools ever created: *Donald in Mathmagic Land*, a 27-minute production starring the studio's hottest character, Donald Duck. This much-loved featurette employs animated and live-action sequences to introduce its viewers to basic mathematical concepts, a history of mathematical thinking in the Western world, and the place of math in music, art, architecture, sports, games, optics, mechanics, and nature. It was initially shown in movie theaters on a double bill with Disney's live-action feature *Darby O'Gill and the Little People* (1959) before becoming a segment of the premiere episode of *Walt Disney's Wonderful World of Color* on NBC-TV in 1961. Schools and municipal libraries often screened *Donald* for youngsters during the 1960s and 1970s, and the Disney company released it with much fanfare as a VHS home video in the 1980s and in various DVD configurations in the 2000s. Despite its datedness, and several outright math errors, it remains a staple in mathematics classes.

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The few studies of *Donald in Mathmagic Land* have been limited largely to discussions of its utility in the classroom (Douglas 1996; Emmer 2013; Iuzzolino 2007; Kolpas 2020; Polster and Ross 2012; Raméntol 2011) or concerns related to the lack of media representation of girls in the science, technology, engineering, and math fields (Fiss 2019; Patel 2019). To help us arrive at a more thorough understanding of the workings of *Donald in Mathmagic Land*, this chapter contextualizes the film within the Disney canon and the paradigms that guided its creation.

In particular, this chapter examines the Disney studio's educational-film strategy, its 'take' on the Alice-in-Wonderland narrative, and their intertwining in *Donald in Mathmagic Land*. Along the way, it considers the production's relationship to an earlier Disney film: *Alice in Wonderland* (1951), an animated feature based on Lewis Carroll's *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* and *Through the Looking-Glass, and What Alice Found There*. Many of the same Disney artisans, writers, and technicians who contributed to *Alice in Wonderland* also worked on *Donald in Mathmagic Land*, and similarities between the two films are evident. *Donald* serves as a kind of corrective to the Disney *Alice*, though, in the sense that it highlights a subject that Carroll wove into his novels but the Disney animators largely ignored in their earlier film: mathematics. Donald acts as a stand-in for Alice—indeed, *Donald's* Red Queen looks at the wayward waterfowl and concludes, 'It could be an Alice'—and he gets quite mathematical in the process. As we shall see, however, it was not simply a case of restoring Carroll material that the Disney animators had omitted in their *Alice*. Instead, *Donald* presents many math topics that go unexplored in the Carroll books but would likely have been appreciated by their author.

The most significant factor that prompted the creation of *Donald in Mathmagic Land* can be summarized in one word: Sputnik. In October 1957, the Soviet Union surged ahead of the United States in the Space Race by successfully sending Sputnik 1 into orbit. The launch of the 22-inch satellite escalated Cold War tensions and led to numerous calls for increased math and science learning in the United States (Fine 1957; Laurence 1957). Congress responded by passing the National Defense Education Act, signed into law by President Dwight Eisenhower on September 2, 1958. The Disney studio, which had been renting its films to schools as early as 1952 (Schickel 2019, 22), was well aware that the federal government, through the NDEA's Title III, would provide matching aid to school systems that acquired math and science learning materials

for use in the classroom. Sensing a ready market, the studio started planning a film that would focus on math learning.

The Disney studio was no stranger to such a pedagogic enterprise. As observed in a previous essay (Norden 2011), the studio had created numerous propaganda and instructional films during and immediately after World War II. By the time of the Sputnik launch, the company was entrenched as a major provider of educational materials in science, nature, and technology. One prominent example of the studio's output at the time was *Our Friend the Atom*, first shown in January 1957 as an episode of ABC-TV's *Disneyland* program. Disney himself noted in late 1959 that the studio had no plans to abandon the lessons it had absorbed during World War II: 'We learned a great deal during the war years when we were making instruction and technological films in which abstract and obscure things had to be made plain and quickly and exactly applicable to the men in the military services. These explorations and efficiencies of our cartoon medium must not be unused' in the edutainment field (1959, 77).

Renowned for his hands-on management style, Disney oversaw the formation of the project's production team. The key members included supervising director Hamilton Luske; film sequence directors Wolfgang Reitherman, Les Clark, and Joshua Meador; story contributors Milt Banda, Bill Berg, and Heinz Haber; and editor Lloyd Richardson. Disney's inclusion of Luske, Banda, Haber, and Richardson was hardly accidental; all had played important roles in the production of *Our Friend the Atom* two years earlier. Supported by a legion of graphic artists, musicians, and technicians, Luske and his crew immediately set to work with the goal of creating a superior mathematics teaching film and getting it shown in movie theaters as a kind of nationwide preview for math teachers and school administrators.

The team members agreed that the film's central figure should be instantly familiar to the audience, and their choice was a no-brainer: Donald Duck, an immensely popular animated figure that had been voiced by Clarence Nash in dozens of Disney cartoons since 1934. The studio had deployed Donald in numerous propaganda and training films during World War II, such as the acclaimed math-related productions *The New Spirit* (1942) and *The Spirit of '43* (1943), produced for the US Treasury Department to show Americans how to calculate their 'taxes to beat the Axis.' Even before the war had ended, the studio was grooming him for general teaching purposes. 'A celluloid duck is emerging from World War II as the greatest potential educational force this world has ever known,'

gushed a *Look* scribe in April 1945. ‘His name is Donald Duck, and he stands for the international picture language developed and perfected over 25 years by his 43-year-old creator, Walt Disney’ (*Look* 1945, 23). The new project, christened *Donald in Mathmagic Land*, would be the first time that the sailor-suited pintail appeared in a movie longer than the studio’s standard seven-to-eight-minute cartoon.

Luske’s team also needed a character who could serve as a kindly mentor for Donald and, by extension, for the audience. This, too, was not a new idea. Starting with *Four Methods of Flush Riveting*, a 1941 instructional film produced on behalf of Lockheed Aircraft, the Disney studio frequently employed teacherly voice-over narrators in its WWII-era training films. The studio had very practical reasons for keeping the narrator offscreen in at least some films; it could accelerate the production process while containing costs. Since this major character was simply a vocal presence, he—and it was always a ‘he’—did not require the labor-intensive, time-consuming animation procedures that brought the other characters to life. Keeping the narrator invisible was an important part of the studio’s streamlined production process.

Luske and his associates needed a name for the all-knowing male voice of authority in *Donald in Mathmagic Land*, and they settled on ‘the True Spirit of Adventure.’ Unlike offscreen narrators in earlier Disney films, however, he speaks directly to the film’s lead character; the Spirit orally guides Donald through the *terra mathematica* while frequently imparting sagacious advice. ‘Mr. Spirit,’ as Donald calls him, thus offers two levels of commentary: a first-order level for Donald, and a second-order level for the audience. To effectuate this highly potent narrational strategy, the studio turned to Paul Frees, a journeyman actor famed for his vocal versatility. Frees, who had voiced three characters in *Our Friend the Atom* among many other productions, provided the ‘pipes’ for the Spirit of Adventure and several of *Donald’s* minor characters.

Another factor that the Luske team needed to consider was *Donald’s* general visual style. In an ongoing effort to produce animated films more efficiently and inexpensively, the studio had begun exploring a set of visual aesthetics that differed from those of its pre-war animated films. Its new approach tended to emphasize visualizations that could be accomplished quickly: flat, angular shapes; splashes of vibrant color and lighting; and obscured background details. This new visual sensibility, developed in large part by Disney artist Mary Blair for such films as *Cinderella* (1950), *Alice in Wonderland*, and *Peter Pan* (1953), characterized many animated

films and television programs of the time. As revealed in a collection of seven full-color design sketches for *Donald in Mathmagic Land* (Halas and Manvell 1962, 79–80), it defined this film’s visual strategies as well.

Another cost-saving measure—the gathering of simple stand-alone photographic imagery—abetted the film’s modernist visual style. *Donald in Mathmagic Land* is remembered as an animated film, but important parts of it consist of live-action images. Intended to show the connections between math and such general topics as architecture, art, and nature, the images include depictions of the United Nations building in New York; famous artworks like the Venus de Milo (Alexandros of Antioch, circa 130 BC), the Mona Lisa (Leonardo Da Vinci, 1503), and Lady Jean (George Bellows, 1924); and such natural features as five-petaled flowers, a honeycomb, a conch shell, starfish, sand dollars, and a dewy spiderweb. Orchestral musicians are also represented via live-action imagery, but their faces are typically bathed in heavy shadow if shown at all. The focus in these photographic images is on their brightly lit instruments—violins, saxophones, trombones, cellos, etc.—rendered in close-ups. Darkness also characterizes a sequence in which a three-cushion billiards player, Ramon Yanez, demonstrates his proficiency at using small diamond shapes on his billiards table’s edges to calculate his shots.

In creating a movie that would be substantially longer than some of the studio’s earlier training films but short enough to fit into a classroom period, Luske and his team understood the need for a compelling narrative framework; it would help them organize their visuals while making the film engaging and fun for younger audiences. In a move that differentiated *Donald* from earlier teaching films, they employed the story strategy of inserting an isolated figure into an unfamiliar world: in brief, the Alice-in-Wonderland narrative.

Unlike Alice of the various *Alice* novels and movies, however, the Luske team was not venturing into *terra incognita*. Indeed, the general Alice-in-Wonderland storyline had a much longer history at the Disney studio than its training-film schema. *Donald in Mathmagic Land*’s narrative structure is intimately connected to Disney’s lifelong fascination with Carroll’s novels, and it is worth examining the ways that this interest manifested itself in the years leading up to *Donald*’s creation.

Disney readily admitted to Carroll’s strong influence on him while growing up in Kansas City, Missouri, in the 1910s. ‘No story in English literature has intrigued me more than Lewis Carroll’s *Alice in Wonderland*,’ he wrote decades later. ‘It fascinated me the first time I read it as a

schoolboy, and as soon as I possibly could after I started making animated cartoons, I acquired the film rights to it' (1946). He began working with *Alice*-related material in 1923, when at age 21 he wrote, produced, and directed *Alice's Wonderland*, a 12-minute silent film. Its title character was played by Virginia Davis, a four-year-old whose charmingly spunky demeanor and corkscrew curls undoubtedly reminded audiences of a very young Mary Pickford. The film's narrative premise is both simple and reflexive. Alice visits an animation studio and, guided by Disney himself (who appears on camera *sans* familiar mustache), witnesses such marvels as an animated mouse who uses a miniature sword to harass a placid live-action cat. After returning home and going to bed, Alice dreams of taking a train—another longstanding Disney interest—to a place called Cartoonland where she happily mingles with various animated animals before outwitting a pride of lions. *Alice's Wonderland* was the first in a series of more than 50 short *Alice* films, each featuring a live-action girl interacting with cartoon characters in animated fantasy settings (Merritt and Kaufman 1993, 48–85; Webb 2000, 12–17). By the time Disney ended the animated/live-action hybrid series in 1927, he was thoroughly hooked on the Alice-in-Wonderland narrative paradigm and its endless possibilities.

Disney started planning a part live-action, part animated *Alice* feature film in the early 1930s that he hoped would star Mary Pickford (Gabler 2006, 486). That initiative, however, came to a halt as a result of the ongoing effects of the Depression and the 1933 release of *Alice in Wonderland*, a live-action film produced by rival Paramount Pictures. Disney never gave up on his plans to produce a feature-length film based on the Carroll material, though the Paramount setback forced him to pursue other *Alice*-related options. In 1938, years after his competitor's *Alice* had tanked at the box office despite a star-studded cast, Disney acquired the rights to the Carroll books and their famous John Tenniel engravings (Gabler 2006, 486).

Before he moved ahead with his own *Alice* feature, however, he produced *Thru the Mirror* (1936), one of many short animated films released by his studio in the 1930s and 1940s. In this eight-minute production, Mickey Mouse, falsetto-voiced by Disney himself, has fallen asleep while reading Carroll's *Through the Looking-Glass*. In his dream, Mickey passes through his own looking glass into a strangely familiar world filled with such items as a quarrelsome rocking chair, a barking ottoman, a scolding umbrella, and a playful telephone. He performs several dance routines

with a deck of playing cards before engaging in a duel with the King of Hearts, who has objected to Mickey's cheek-to-cheek dancing with his Queen. At the King's command, the cards launch an assault on Mickey, who ingeniously defeats them before returning through the mirror and reuniting with his sleeping self.

Another eight-minute Disney animated film inspired by the Alice-in-Wonderland model is *Der Fuehrer's Face*, which won the 1943 Oscar for best animated short subject. In this famous World War II propaganda film, Donald Duck finds himself in a strange country called 'Nutzi Land' where shrubbery and windmill blades have been sculpted into swastikas and a goose-stepping oompah band constantly marches through the countryside, performing the satiric title tune. Mercilessly harassed by the band members, Donald is forced to assemble artillery shells in a munitions factory. The unrelenting pressure—an offscreen male voice proclaims that Nutzi Land citizens must 'work 48 hours a day for der Fuehrer'—pushes Donald over the edge, and he experiences a nightmare in which his artillery shells mutate into factory whistles, oompah band members, shark-like entities, and even der Fuehrer himself. Everything ends happily, though, when Donald awakens to learn that the whole thing, and not just the nightmare, had only been a dream. The wording of the film's original title—*Donald Duck in Nutzi Land*, changed to *Der Fuehrer's Face* to capitalize on the title song's enormous popularity—strongly suggests the movie's connection to other films informed by the Carroll works: a familiar character in an unfamiliar land.

With wartime concerns behind him in the fall of 1945, Disney returned to the idea of a feature-length film based on Carroll's novels. After a few false starts—most notably, Disney's rejection of a screenplay by Aldous Huxley as too serious and too literal of an adaptation—production began in earnest in 1946. On its surface, the plan was simple: create an animated feature film in the tradition of the studio's *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs* (1937), *Pinocchio* (1940), *Bambi* (1942), and *Cinderella* by borrowing from *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* and, to a lesser extent, *Through the Looking-Glass*. As he and his studio geared up for a feature-length animated film based on the novels, Disney praised Carroll for his pre-animation sensibility—or 'nonsensibility,' perhaps:

Carroll was revolutionary in the field of literature. He violated the serious Victorian tradition by writing *Alice* in a vein of fantasy and nonsense. In fact, he was a pace-setter for the motion picture cartoon and the comic strip of

today by the style he introduced in his fantasy. People in his period had no time to waste on triviality, yet Carroll with his nonsense and fantasy furnished a balance between seriousness and enjoyment which everybody needed then and still needs today (Disney 1946).

As Disney noted shortly before the film's release, though, the adaptation proved difficult. The challenges included the novels' large number of characters, lack of a traditional narrative structure, and sheer length, which would be difficult to compress into an animated feature's standard running time. Disney's enthusiasm for Carroll's *Alice's Adventures* never wavered, however. 'If I hadn't regarded it as one of the masterpieces of all time, for both adults and children, I would not have undertaken a film version,' he wrote (Disney 1951).

The resulting *Alice in Wonderland*, a 75-minute animated musical comedy, debuted in late July 1951. Though children loved the film, it did not fare well with adults. A *Times* critic who attended the premiere at London's Leicester Square Theatre could not resist offering a backhanded compliment: 'How admirable Mr. Walt Disney's film of *Alice in Wonderland* would seem if one did not know Carroll!' The critic spoke for many by opining that the film's musical numbers—the most in any Disney film up to that time and quite raucous overall—ruined the Carroll novels' sense of wonder and wistfulness (*Times* 1951).

The film's disappointing performance at the box office did not dissuade the Disney forces from using a variation on the Alice-in-Wonderland narrative to structure *Donald in Mathmagic Land* eight years later. In fact, many leaders of the *Donald* production team had worked on Disney's *Alice* in 1951. *Donald*'s supervising director Hamilton Luske was one of *Alice*'s three credited directors, and the other two—Wilfred Jackson and Clyde Geronimi—contributed previously filmed animated footage to the new project. *Donald*'s sequence directors—Wolfgang Reitherman, Les Clark, and Joshua Meador—had all worked on *Alice in Wonderland* as animators. In addition, *Donald* story contributor Milt Banta had helped develop the *Alice* script, Lloyd Richardson edited both films, Bob Carlson worked on both as a character animator, and Ethmer Roten performed for both as an offscreen flautist. Add to these factors the success of Disneyland, which had opened in Anaheim, California, in 1955 and offered experiences that Disney himself characterized as 'like Alice stepping through the Looking Glass' (quoted in Smith 2001), and it was clear what direction the studio's math-learning film was going to take.

Unlike the Disney *Alice* and the Carroll novels, *Donald in Mathmagic Land* does not begin with anything resembling a framing story. It simply starts with Donald, inexplicably armed with a rifle and wearing a pith helmet, entering a dark and mysterious number-bedecked terrain. An extra-filmic source—the Dell comic book version of *Donald in Mathmagic Land*, published shortly after the film’s premiere—reveals the context; Donald has been desperately scouring a mathematics book late at night for a solution to financial problems engineered by his usurious uncle, Scrooge McDuck. After a fruitless search, the hapless duck falls asleep and begins imagining a magical land of mathematics (Christensen 1959, 2–3).

With Donald having dreamt himself into the titular locale, the movie continues the narrative by showing him discovering a strange sight: a path filled with numbers scribbled by a wingless, backward-walking pencil bird that, in a subtle reference to the Pythagorean Theorem, has a 90-degree triangular ruler for a body. An elongated cousin of the pencil birds that live in the Disney *Alice*’s Tulgey Wood, the creature draws a large crosshatch on the ground with its pencil head and challenges Donald to a game of tic-tac-toe. It defeats Donald within seconds and vanishes, leaving the perplexed duck to exclaim to no one in particular, ‘What kind of a crazy place is this?’

Donald continues his otherworldly journey by crossing a waterfall-fed brook flowing with numbers that occasionally split into smaller ones as they float downstream (in a nod to *Our Friend the Atom*, the animators placed a cluster of golden orbs bearing the atomic energy symbol near the waterfall). He then arrives at a wooded area that holds several surprises. He notices that the trees have bare roots bent at 90-degree angles and readily identifies the odd arboreal characteristics: ‘Square roots!’ Before he can study them, however, he encounters three animated geometric figures perched on an overhead tree branch: a dark brown circle, a light brown triangle, and a yellow rectangle. The shapes, each with its own set of eyes and bird-like legs, overlap to form a bizarre creature that would be quite at home among the many avian-esque entities that populate the Disneyfied Tulgey Wood. Voiced by Paul Frees, the composite character recites the value of π to a thoroughly baffled Donald. It is not unlike the moment when Alice, lost in the woods, looks up and discovers the Cheshire Cat on a bough. There is a twist, however; the composite creature’s mouth appears only after the three geometric shapes come together, whereas the Cheshire Cat’s toothy grin is the first and last part of him that Alice sees.

After the entity completes its recitation, its mouth disappears and it splits back into the three separate geometric shapes.

Though the Disney scriptwriters unfortunately gave Frees the wrong value of π to utter, it is somehow fitting that this irrational number should take center stage in an apparently irrational land that quickly reveals itself to be quite rational: the world of mathematics. In a sense, it is a reversal of a situation in *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* that involves the iconic 'In this Style 10/6' card in the Mad Hatter's hat. Though Carroll stated that the digits referred to the hat's price—ten shillings and sixpence (1889, 40)—the 10/6 could be construed as a plea that math be 'in this style': a conventional rational number, prominently on display in an otherwise thoroughly irrational land. Such a plea comes into sharper focus if we consider Carroll's perspectives on math and the commentary on the 'new' math that he inserted into his novels.

Donald in Mathmagic Land's erroneous handling of π notwithstanding, Carroll would have doubtlessly approved of the film's general treatment of math issues. As is widely known, Carroll was a traditional, grounded mathematician who taught at Oxford's Christ Church college for many years. A primary figure in his personal pantheon was Euclid, generally acknowledged as the founder of geometry. Another was Pythagoras, whose eponymous theorem—perhaps the most famous in all of mathematics—formed part of the basis for Euclid's world-renowned book, *Elements*. Carroll, who relied heavily on *Elements* as a textbook during his years at Christ Church, lauded the ageless elegance of Pythagoras' Theorem. As he wrote, 'Neither thirty years, nor thirty centuries, affect the clearness, or the charm, of Geometric truths. Such a theorem as "the square of the hypotenuse of a right-angled triangle is equal to the sum of the squares of the sides" is as dazzlingly beautiful now as it was in the day when Pythagoras first discovered it' (Dodgson 1890, xvi). Carroll would have been intrigued by a fairly lengthy sequence in *Donald in Mathmagic Land* that immediately follows the woodsy scene noted above; the Spirit of Adventure transports Donald to ancient Greece to meet Pythagoras, whom the Spirit identifies as the father of math and music. Though Pythagoras does not speak, Donald manages to initiate an impromptu jazz session with him and two followers. During his visit, Donald and the audience learn a great deal about this historical figure and his findings, such as the two-to-one ratios of octaves and the creation of harmonies through simple fractions. The sequence investigates other Pythagorean discoveries

as well—namely, the pentagram and the ‘Golden Rectangle’—and their applications to the built and natural worlds.

The film’s strongest connection to Carroll’s interest in applied mathematics is a sequence in which the Spirit introduces Donald to the game of chess. This narrative unit gave the Disney animators the opportunity to combine moments from *Alice’s Adventures in Wonderland* and their own *Alice* film with material from *Through the Looking-Glass* that they had not used in their earlier movie: Alice’s interaction with rather irritable chess pieces. The Disney filmmakers were well aware of Carroll’s love of the venerable board game and use of it as the primary environment in *Looking-Glass*. As the Spirit notes, chess is ‘a mathematical contest between two minds. It’s a game that has been enjoyed for centuries by kings and commoners. In fact, Lewis Carroll, a famous mathematician with a literary mind, used chess as a setting for his classic tale, *Through the Looking-Glass*.’

While the Spirit intones these lines, Donald finds himself on a giant animated chessboard where he is immediately boxed in by four pawns taller than him. He pries himself free but accidentally backs into a White Knight, who scowls ferociously at Donald and, unlike his counterpart in *Through the Looking-Glass*, offers no help whatsoever. The sequence then takes a gender-bending turn as the Spirit continues his commentary: ‘Alice found herself face to face with a none too friendly group of chess pieces.’ Upon the Spirit’s utterance of the name ‘Alice,’ Donald is suddenly transformed into an approximation of the young heroine. Now bewigged, he wears a light blue dress, a white apron, and a hair ribbon—the same ensemble worn by Alice in the Disney *Alice* minus the petticoats, white stockings, and Mary Jane shoes. He is then confronted by the Red Queen and the Red King, voiced respectively by Jane Fowler Boyd and Paul Frees. Despite a somewhat goofy grotesqueness to their visualizations, the Queen and King bear an unmistakable resemblance to John Tenniel’s *Looking-Glass* renderings of the figures (see Image 9.1). The couple is confused by Donald’s presence:

RED QUEEN: Good heavens, what’s this?

RED KING: Upon my soul, it appears to be a lost pawn.

DONALD: I’m no pawn. I’m Donald Duck.

RED QUEEN: He says he’s Donald Duck.

RED KING: Preposterous.

RED QUEEN: Or it could be an Alice.

DONALD: Alice?!

RED KING: No, no, no. It’s a lost pawn.

RED QUEEN: Lost pawn? Stop that pawn!



Image 9.1 Alice encounters the Red Queen in *Through the Looking-Glass*. The Disney animators mimicked this famous John Tenniel illustration, even down to the positioning of the characters and the design of the Red Queen's crown, scepter, and hairnet. The Disneyfied version of this moment, with Donald Duck dressed as Alice, occurs at about the 14-minute mark in *Donald in Mathmagic Land*

Donald flees from the royal couple only to encounter a lance-wielding Red Knight, who, like the novel's 'Knight dressed in crimson armour' (Carroll 1871, 158), thinks the lead character is a White Pawn that needs to be captured. Other chess pieces try to block Donald's movements, but he eludes them by diving off the chessboard. He then crashes into a small

trunk that pops open to reveal a load of pink cookies and a sign that reads HURRY EAT ONE. In a distinctly *Alice*-like moment, Donald follows the printed advice and instantly grows large, thus enabling him to view the chessboard from a high angle. 'Now you can look at this game from a safer perspective,' says the Spirit, prompting the *Donald* filmmakers to include rather primitive animation of actual chess pieces while a xylophonist and other offscreen performers 'mickey mouse' (i.e., musically mimic) the pieces' movements to end the sequence.

The abundance of math-related material in *Donald in Mathmagic Land* represents a significant departure from the Disney studio's approach to *Alice in Wonderland* eight years earlier. Though Carroll had included allusions to math in his two main *Alice* novels, the Disney animators used virtually none in their 1951 film. One of the few things that could be construed as mathematical is the 'un-birthday' material, which the filmmakers had lifted from Alice's lengthy chat with Humpty Dumpty in *Through the Looking-Glass* and grafted onto the movie's tea party scene. It is very slight: 365 days in the year minus one birthday per year equals 364 un-birthdays per year. Another might be the Caterpillar's seemingly random remark, 'Keep your temper,' uttered in both *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* and the Disney *Alice*. Alice is about to alter her size by nibbling on two sides of a mushroom. Following a Victorian-era usage of 'temper,' Carroll likely intended the Caterpillar's line to mean 'Keep your proper proportions' as she changes size. Alice famously has difficulty following this math-related advice in the novel (her neck temporarily becomes quite long and serpentine) but less so in the movie.

It would be a mistake to assume, however, that the type of math found in *Donald in Mathmagic Land* is the same as Carroll's math references in *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* that went unused in the Disney *Alice*. To quote the Caterpillar again, 'It isn't.' Carroll was not fond of the non-Euclidian mathematical concepts that some of his contemporaries had advanced—non-commutative equations, imaginary numbers, square roots of negative numbers, etc.—and he used *Alice's Adventures* to satirize them. For him, these new mathematical developments represented a mad world where few things made sense. He said so in his *Alice* fiction, if subtly and indirectly.

For example, in Chap. 3 of *Alice's Adventures*, the young protagonist has become confused about nearly everything. To reassure herself that she is still Alice and not someone else, she tries to recite what she knows about math: 'Let me see: four times five is twelve, and four times six is thirteen, and four times seven is—oh dear! I shall never get to twenty at that rate!' (Carroll 1865, 19–20). As Taylor (1952, 46–47), Abeles (1976, 183–84), and others have observed, Alice thought she was working in base 10, unaware that the answers popping into her head were derived from different bases: 18, 21, 24. In other words, the traditional rules governing multiplication were not applying.

Carroll also took a swipe at the abstract algebraic concept of quaternions, introduced in 1843 by Irish mathematician William Rowan Hamilton. Quaternions, Hamilton posited, consist of three imaginary spatial dimensions and the fourth dimension of time. If time is removed as a dimension, the remaining three numbers will rotate endlessly. Carroll mocked this argument in the tea-party scene in *Alice's Adventures* by having the Mad Hatter explain to Alice why he, the March Hare, and the Dormouse constantly move about the table; they think it is forever tea-time since a fourth character, Time, has not shown up. Though the Disney *Alice* goes a step further by actually showing the characters manically rounding the table, the Hatter's explanation is nowhere to be found in the ensuing cacophony.

The Disney filmmakers likely believed that Carroll's jabs at the new math—assuming they were even recognized as such—posed problems that would be difficult to surmount in the animation process. The allusions often emerged during dialogue-heavy scenes, which the animators had a tendency to cut. The filmmakers may have felt that any attempts to address the targets of Carroll's scorn would weigh down the films' narrative momentum and ultimately contribute little to the relatively brief, child-oriented films they were trying to make. They were on surer footing by limiting themselves to non-controversial math topics in *Donald* and practically none in *Alice*.

History has an odd way of repeating itself, as it did here. Carrollian scholars have long known that the author included relatively little math material in the three variations on the original *Alice* narrative: his oral rendering of it to young Alice Liddell and her sisters on that momentous 1862 Thames boat ride, the handwritten draft that Alice begged him to prepare, and its publication decades later as *Alice's Adventures Under*

Ground (Carroll 1886). However, when Carroll revised the story and published it as *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* three years after that 'golden afternoon' with the Liddell girls, it contained pointed mathematical references such as the ones noted above. In a similar vein, the Disney studio's *Alice in Wonderland* featured very little math. If we regard *Donald in Mathmagic Land* as a loose *Alice* revision, though, we find a similar situation: a plethora of math topics where there had been virtually none before.

The key difference is traceable to contemporaneous issues; the Disney animators presented teachable math concepts in response to socio-political imperatives of the late 1950s, whereas Carroll satirized what he believed were outlandish developments in his field in the mid-1800s. The Disney-Carroll agendas were incommensurate, though one could argue that Carroll was engaged in a different kind of pedagogy: employing derisive humor to educate his readers about the folly of the new math.

Though *Donald* does not have the biting satire or subtle wit of Carroll's novels, it shares several things with the author's general perspectives. Firstly, it follows his interest in using surrealistic landscapes as venues for adventure and self-discovery. After Donald finds himself in the wooded area noted earlier, the Spirit of Adventure whisks him away to such places as ancient Greece, a giant chessboard, a baseball diamond, a billiards room, a long hallway with an endless number of doors, and even Donald's own mind, represented as a tiny room crammed with overstuffed filing cabinets (and cleaned up by an animated broom right out of Disney's 1940 film, *Fantasia*). *Donald's* frequent and abrupt changes in location and topic, a quality shared with Carroll's novels, only add to its fragmented, dreamlike 'feel.' Disney's affinity for surrealism was well known—he shared a deep friendship with Salvador Dalí, greatly admired his paintings, and began collaborating with the famed surrealist artist on a short animated film, *Destino*, in the mid-1940s—and it found full expression in *Donald in Mathmagic Land*.

In addition, *Donald's* general Pythagorean/Euclidian orientation is quite in line with Carroll's mathematic values. It explores traditional Western concepts of mathematics and abounds with discussions and animated visualizations of geometric figures, proportions, ratios, and angles. Replete with practical, real-world applications of math, *Donald in Mathmagic Land* is a showcase for Carrollian (or perhaps more accurately, Dodgsonian) math topics.

As this chapter has shown, *Donald in Mathmagic Land* was designed as a synthesis of two dominant and disparate threads in the ‘Disneyverse’: the instructional model that the studio had cultivated during the World War II years and the general Alice-in-Wonderland narrative. As an *ersatz* Alice, Donald gets extraordinarily mathematical while embarking on what the Spirit of Adventure aptly characterizes as ‘a journey through the Wonderland of mathematics.’ It is a journey that Carroll would have surely advocated.

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Alice, Interrupted: Reflecting on the Changing Chronology of the Girl in Disney's *Looking-Glass*

Alexandra Heatwole

For over a century, *Alice* has been synonymous with femininity, youth, and *bildungsroman*. While Lewis Carroll's ubiquitous heroine needs little introduction, with the many adaptations of his character, both textual and iconographic, it is important to separate the *original* Alice, and her very first encounters with *Wonderland* (1865) and the world through the *Looking-Glass* (1871), from her later trans-media interpretations. Alice begins as a girl making her way through spaces both foreign and familiar, negotiating her way forward just as she negotiates her occupation of these spaces, physically and socially. The work she does in *Wonderland* and the *Looking-Glass World* to understand her relationship to the environment around her is the essence of what makes her an enduring figure in the literary and cinematic worlds, perhaps because it so closely resembles the way non-fantasy beings such as ourselves carve out our own social and cultural spaces. In order to analyze this, we shall therefore refer to Michel Foucault's work, particularly his understanding of the amorphous, multi-dimensional

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realms he referred to as *heterotopias*, which is based upon our relationship to our physical, temporal, and sociocultural worlds.

In the essay ‘Of Other Spaces’ (derived from a 1967 lecture) Foucault argues that ‘heterotopias’ are spaces both of the world and outside it, capable of transporting a person out of one’s current reality, and—importantly—out of the linear progression we commonly understand as time. The theory of the French philosopher, laid out through six principles detailing the features that define a heterotopia, was constructed around public spaces, such as the cemetery or fairground, which offer an escape or force a retreat from routine or normality. However, it is also an easy fit for the Alice duology, and readily applicable to most fantasy worlds—particularly those that resemble our own, and find entrances in real spaces like wardrobes or rabbit holes. Fittingly, for his first example of heterotopia, Foucault offers us a mirror-world:

In the mirror, I see myself there where I am not, in an unreal, virtual space that opens up behind the surface; I am over there, there where I am not, a sort of shadow that gives my own visibility to myself [...] From the ground of this virtual space that is on the other side of the glass, I come back toward myself; I begin again to direct my eyes toward myself and to reconstitute myself there where I am. (1986, 23)

Foucault’s second and third principles use the further examples of the cemetery, which both enhances and negates one’s connection to the physical in their contemplation of death and the soul, and the cinema and the carpets of the East (which he contends were originally flattened representations of gardens) as heterotopic dimensional changes, expanding and condensing physicality (1967, 24).

Wonderland and the world through the Looking-Glass, are, similarly, spaces that, while resembling our reality, are not a tangible representation of that which we know to be true. Alice’s shadow self also proves to be an unreliable manifestation of the real, moving between sizes, names, and self-identifications. Alice can hardly ever explain who she is within or in relation to these fantasy worlds. In Wonderland, she insists: ‘I know who I WAS when I got up this morning, but I think I must have been changed several times since then’ (Carroll 2003, 55). In reaction to her heterotopic milieu, Alice herself becomes both real and unreal, at once herself and not. When at the end of *Looking-Glass*, she asks ‘Who dreamed it?’ (259), wondering if her adventures were the product of her own imagination or

someone else's, it is clear her sense of identity has become disjointed, and that neither she nor the reader can trust it to be what it seems.

Beyond the physical, Foucault adds the principle of *heterochrony*, the 'absolute break from traditional time' provided by heterotopic spaces (1967, 25). He points to the museum—a space where time is 'accumulated,' 'a place of all times that is itself outside of time and inaccessible to its ravages'—and the 'absolutely temporal' fairground as opposite ends of the spectrum of temporal disruption (1967, 25). In either of these spaces, linear time and daily routine are set aside. While it is obvious in the endings of both books that Alice's visits to the fantasy world presented in the novels are indeed heterochronic, in that in her return to reality she feels as though no time has passed, even *within* the timelines of Alice's adventures, time is frequently interrupted, disjointed, or unmoving. For example, in the world through the Looking-Glass, Alice is swept up with the White Queen in a sudden sprint. After running for quite some time, Alice realizes that they have not moved at all. In surprise, she remarks: 'In *our* country [...] you'd generally get to somewhere else—if you ran very fast for a long time.' 'A slow sort of country!' responds the queen. 'Now, *here*, you see, it takes all the running *you* can do, to keep in the same place. If you want to get somewhere else, you must run at least twice as fast as that!' (Carroll 2003, 175).

We understand from scenes like this that in the collective fantasy land that Alice dips in and out of in the Carroll books a structured, linear understanding of time is absent. This is most concerning to Alice as it impacts her physical development: amid her growth spurts and shrinking spells, she ponders whether she will ever grow older (2003, 45); she is also taken aback by Humpty Dumpty's rather morbid suggestion that it might be arranged for her to '[leave] off at seven' (216). The break in linear time, along with her unpredictable size, gives Alice literal pause to consider what growing up looks like, and what it might mean for her. To suggest an overall *reasoning* for her trips into these fantasy realms is really to go against the nonsensical spirit of the books. But as I and others have argued elsewhere (Driscoll and Heatwole 2016)—in keeping with Deleuze's (1969) theory of Alice as 'unlimited becoming'—if there *is* a purpose to be found for Wonderland/the Looking-Glass world, it is as a safe space for an exploration of Alice's burgeoning adolescence.

This brings us to the *function* of the heterotopia. Beyond transporting us for the purposes of entertainment, education, punishment, or meditation, Foucault argues that throughout time, many sociocultural spaces

have operated as ‘crisis heterotopia[s]’ (1986, 24), spaces (boarding schools, honeymoon destinations, etc.) intentionally set apart in which social agents ‘in crisis’—and here he specifically cites the adolescent—are able to go through the rites of passage necessary to return to society having come *through* the process or change presented here as ‘crisis.’ This would be an apt explanation for Alice’s adventures—in which she experiments with grown-up behaviors (such as table manners), roles (she becomes a queen), and relationships (as is the case with the chivalric romance with the elderly knight)—if in fact Alice ever seemed to move on within them, or from them. While it is implied at the end of *Wonderland* that Alice is meant to grow up and become a woman and mother (Carroll 2003, 144), that it is not made explicit allows Alice as we know her to remain little—and, as she wonders who dreamed her adventures, perhaps even unreal, and unbound from the inevitabilities of time. In this way, Alice is static, in a constant state of becoming—or, as Foucault would put it, a constant state of ‘crisis,’ without ever achieving the intended outcome: adulthood.

But while these are the limitations of the Alice *books*, they are certainly not the end of Alice herself. More contemporary explorations of Alice understand her not as a fictional character of the Victorian era, but as a transmedia phenomenon, a persona and context that transcend their original source and exist rather as a cultural entity whose ‘ownership’ belongs less to Carroll and more to the audience who consumes her across a multitude of texts—written, filmed, and otherwise. Anna Kérchy summarizes the collective mass of Alice texts as ‘interrelated constituents of a gigantic transmedia experience, each contributing in unique ways to an unprecedented elaborate story-world,’ which she identifies as ‘Transmedia Wonderland’ (2016, 2). This approach is necessary, as Carroll’s Alice is, after over a century and a half of appropriation for various adaptations and cultural uses, almost indistinct to most audiences from this or that song, movie version, or video game. ‘Alice’ encompasses them all, as does ‘Wonderland.’ Most recently, the Netflix series *Alice in Borderland* (2020), based on a popular manga, follows a male protagonist named Arisu through a highly dangerous video game world where his quest for survival finds him allying with or vying against characters resembling the White Rabbit and the Mad Hatter. While the context is very different from the original story, we know what to expect based on its association with the Alice tale: a *bildungsroman* of sorts, with challenges that go against our

understanding of reality, in a heterotopic world. This is exactly what the series delivers.

But a male Alice is rare—Alice is much more commonly cast as a girl or young woman, and her story is usually one of navigating specifically feminine youth. Much like Carroll's Alice, who navigates feminine roles (maid, maiden, queen) in order to comprehend her never-achieved womanly fate, Alice has been used over time to explore the journey of 'becoming-woman' (Driscoll 1997). As Alice morphed over time into more cultural phenomenon than singular character, she began to symbolize all feminine struggles and challenges. Stevie Nicks used Alice as a metaphor for the juggling act of the 1980s career woman in her album *The Other Side of the Mirror*: 'For Alice to run back and forth between the looking glass is kind of what I perceive my whole life to be, running back and forth between two places,' said Nicks in an interview (Giles 2014). In 2009, the film *Malice in Wonderland* (directed by Simon Fellows) saw a modern-day Alice navigating the real-life dangers of underworld London, from drugs to sexual predators. Trans-media Alice is not relegated to her story and her little girl-ness, but instead contains all the possibilities of womanhood.

This all-encompassing feminine Alice has had long associations with feminism and feminist theory. As the ultimate girl symbol, her journey and its starts and stops have been used culturally and studied academically as a metaphor for the struggles of female agency—or lack thereof. There are many explorations of Alice's primary characterization as exemplary of the endless drive toward female subjectivity—and, importantly, its ultimate *futility*, as agency is generally controlled and limited within a patriarchal society. With adulthood, says Rosi Braidotti, the woman enters a 'phallic regime of signification' in which she immediately becomes the object to the male subject, resulting in 'the foreclosure of women's subjectivity as a whole' (2002, 45). Catherine Driscoll elaborates: "It is because women never become the Subject which adulthood refers to that becoming-woman produces an identity which is not an outcome of her process but is that process itself" (1997, 95). Alice's original narrative particularly reflects this, as almost every situation seems totally beyond her control, and her primarily heterotopic existence points to the endlessness of the feminine growing-up process. To many feminist scholars, this means that there is no potential completion for Alice's becoming; Alice's existence is forever delimited within the boundaries of girlhood.

But perhaps times have changed for Alice. Undeniably the most recognizable, most globally representative manifestation of her character is that

created and maintained by Disney—and Disney’s Alice has undergone quite a transformation in the last half-century. Prior to the recent spate of adaptations, the most recognizable filmic Alice was that of the 1951 animation (see also Chaps. 7 and 8 in this volume). While this version of the character was more attuned than Carroll’s Alice to the sociability and participatory quality of twentieth-century girlhood (Bonner and Jacobs 2011), it seemed to eliminate Alice’s curiosity and tendency to question or interpret her interactions with others (Chaston 1997). Rather than a journey of understanding, Alice becomes something of a damsel in distress, and any capacity for personal growth is replaced instead with a need to return home and safety immediately. Rather than a heterotopic space for play and negotiation of her ‘crisis’ phase, Wonderland becomes a diversion from Alice’s otherwise straightforward trajectory toward adulthood; it is not so much a *bildungsroman* as the fantasy vignette of a charming but one-dimensional child.

But while Alice was gradually morphing and twisting on TVs, radios, and consoles worldwide, it was not until sixty years later that Disney took on Alice once more as a major motion picture, with Tim Burton’s *Alice in Wonderland* (2010). A short-lived Disney series followed (Horowitz and Kitsis 2013–2014), and then James Bobin’s sequel, *Alice Through the Looking-Glass* (2016) continued Burton’s storyline a few years later. An examination of the first film gives the audience a very different Alice to that of the original book series and the 1950s animation—an Alice who has embraced the lessons of post-feminist, Girl Power rhetoric common to the 1990s and early 2000s, and become the heroine of a very different story. This Alice solves the problems presented to her while weaving in and out of time and space, and leaves Wonderland changed, confident, and ready to begin a new chapter of her life. To be a *heroine*, a true protagonist, whose actions meaningfully define the movement of the plot—this alone is a huge evolution for the Alice character.

This rush of adaptations now seems reflective of a peak in the phenomenon of post-feminist renegotiation—a working out of what the empty, bright pink promises of Girl Power might mean to the now adult, or nearly adult women who had begun to reckon with the fashion/beauty complex and the commodification of their identity (Gill 2007). It is logical that in a period when girls had become the newly central focus of media concern and attention that Alice would be brought out for a series of reinventions, specifically exploring *adolescent* Alice as a girl heroine. How might the iconic character be reimagined in a world of ‘empowered’ girls? Of course,

Disney—whose commercial interest focuses largely on appealing to both girls and their now-grown mothers, who were once girls—*had* to take up this question.

Burton's adaptation, while retaining some elements of the original story (such as Alice's unpredictable size), turns Alice into the hero, saving 'Underland' from tyranny and destruction, and returning to reality with a newfound confidence, inspiring her to travel the world as a merchant explorer. At the end of the film, Alice sees the Caterpillar, now a butterfly, flit by as she makes her way to her next adventure; this, of course, serves the function of leaving the film open to sequels, but also reveals that her visits to 'Underland' are unfinished, and that her heterotopic becoming is still incomplete, suggesting a rereading of Alice as a more grown-up girl, but still a girl-in-progress. Like the butterfly, Alice has morphed (as she does) into a representation of the infinite potentialities for the can-do girl of the 1990s (Harris 2004)—now in her teens, she has endless futures stretching out ahead of her. But Wonderland is, in this rendition, still as it has always been: a space for working out those identities, without temporal limitations, and, importantly, without *end*.

But since this first film release in 2010, things have changed—both within Wonderland, and without. In our world, there has been a high-speed supersaturation of technological advances and an exponential increase in access to information, which has created a new generation whose cultural knowledge, by its infinite access to information, can only be much broader and less controllable by public discourse than the girls who watched *The Little Mermaid* (1989) and *Beauty and the Beast* (1991). This more culturally conscious audience has created a demand for more diverse, multi-dimensional protagonists. Disney has supplied that demand, with the follow-up Alice film a bastion of its second 'renaissance.' Emerging in the same period, *Brave* (2012) and *Moana* (2016) offer more realistic-looking heroines seeking adventure rather than romance; *Frozen* (2013) includes the more and more common Disney theme of hiding one's true identity—often construed as a veiled nod to the LGBTQIA+ community (Nikolas 2014). This reenvisioning of the Disney princess *without* her prince is a move away from postfeminist politics and toward post-internet, Gen Z inclusivity and fluidity of identity (Tsjeng 2016). This is not to say that, through these films, Disney is acting as an agent of change—rather, Disney's films provide a mirror to a shift in cultural mindsets which the company is very skilled at commodifying (Hains 2014; Heatwole 2016).

It follows, therefore, that the most recent of these films ought to represent the most current social attitudes and cultural knowledge of the symbolic girl/Alice. What is most interesting about the decidedly final Alice follow-up film, *Looking-Glass*, is twofold: first, its treatment of chronological time in ‘Underland’; second, its foreclosure of a future for Alice there, coinciding with an opening of real-world futures available to her in contemporary England. In these ways, this rendition of Alice is unique, and offers a kind of denouement to the Alice tale that may reflect a shift in the space occupied by transmedia Alice (confront with Chap. 7 in the present collection).

We begin where we left off at the end of *Alice in Wonderland*: having slain the Jabberwocky, saved Underland, and returned to England, Alice (Mia Wasikowska) is now in the middle of her adventures as captain of a merchant vessel comprising all male crewmembers—with the masculine naval suit to match. Pursued by pirates, she orders a risky maneuver that requires her own physical prowess as well as navigational expertise to complete. At a glance, this swashbuckling beginning is the extension of a plot device that came under considerable criticism in the years following the first film’s release: the overmasculinization of the girl hero. It is a familiar issue within feminist film theory (Brown 2004, among others) but Alex Brink applies it directly to Burton’s *Wonderland*, saying that his efforts to squeeze Alice into more masculine attire and action ‘ultimately suggests that female characters can only gain equality and power by shirking femininity and instead embodying masculine qualities’ (2014, 3).

However, in *Looking-Glass*, Alice seems to become more feminized as the film goes on, first appearing in rather out-of-place regal robes from China, and then even more flowing skirts, her hair now falling around her shoulders in waves. Her characterization is also softened as the film progresses, with the plot revolving around the distinctly feminine act of healing (Ehrenreich and English 1973, among others). Alice must bring the Hatter (Johnny Depp) out of an all-consuming depression, and in order to do so she must learn to forgo action, taking on the largely passive role of observation as she goes back in time to find his family and understand their fate.

For her quest, Alice needs the Chronosphere—the magical entity that keeps the Grand Clock ticking, moving time forward, and which, when possessed, allows its holder to travel through the Ocean of Time. To obtain this, she must go through Time himself (Sacha Baron Cohen)—a rather cleverly devised character, drawn, apparently, from a throwaway

comment from Carroll's Mad Hatter referring to a personal relationship with 'him' (2003, 82). Time keeps stopwatches representing every human being in Wonderland—and possibly Earth, this is not made clear. That Alice is carrying the stopped pocket watch of her dead father (the very first object to be framed in a close-up as soon as she is in London in the second scene of the film) creates a real world connection to the symbolism of the linear (and finite) time of a human life.

A few moments before Alice slips into the Looking-Glass world, her mother (Lindsay Duncan) warns her that she cannot keep living idealistically, seeking adventure rather than practicalities, telling her that her 'time is running out,' something 'every woman must face' (an affirmation that the young woman rejects through her physical posture by showing her back to her mother in the frame that includes both characters). The implication that Alice's time itself is gendered is perhaps novelly put, but it is not conceptually new. Julia Kristeva (1981) famously wrote of 'Women's Time' that *linear* time was a masculine realm, with women's time linked instead to a more 'mystical' space *outside* of the linear. The implication here is that feminine time is distinctly heterochronic, while masculine time is straightforwardly constraining. Within a patriarchal society—which, of course, Victorian England inarguably is—women are objects trapped within linear time. We all understand what Alice's mother means when she expresses her concern for Alice's time: Alice is, unmetaphorically, becoming a woman, and a woman must get married and have children before it is 'too late.' Alice's adventures must come to an end so she can become a socially interpellated feminine being.

What happens thereafter is a series of events linked to familial—and specifically generational—healing. The Hatter, a character that is implicitly, if not explicitly queered here, is finally accepted by his parents, and Alice also succeeds in helping the Red and White Queens (Helena Bonham Carter and Anne Hathaway) mend their sisterly relationship.¹ But Alice must mend her own fences as well, and her relationship with her mother is aided in a brief interlude that offers a nod to the audience's knowledge

¹ Importantly, this plotline also revolves around a 'hysterical' woman being robbed of her agency. The great divide between the Red and White Queens is that, because of a minor disagreement, the Red Queen sustains an injury in youth that makes her head too large for her crown. At her coronation, she becomes so enraged by this that she has a public meltdown—for which her father, the king, deems her unfit to rule. The White Queen's demure, more appropriately 'feminine' manner, is rewarded, while the Red Queen is humiliated and dethroned.

of women's history. In her meanderings through time, Alice awakens in a mental hospital being seen to by a Dr. Addison (played by Andrew Scott). Notably, this version of the real world is distinctly duller in color than the vivid landscapes of *Underland*—drab greens, browns, and grays are accentuated by low, artificial lighting, giving the scene a darkly clinical aesthetics. Alice's bright, primary-colored party attire from the film's first act can be seen briefly, folded beside her, a reminder of Alice's otherness within this antiseptic vision of reality. 'Excitable, emotional, prone to fantasy, textbook case of female hysteria—untreatable, some would say. I beg to differ,' the doctor says, producing a large syringe. His sadistic smile (as well as his menacing and suffocating positioning over Alice's body) betrays an overall disdain for his female patient (and by association the feminine gender) as he attempts to sedate her. Fortunately, between Alice's own efforts and her mother forcing her way into the room, Alice escapes.

This short scene accomplishes several purposes. First and most obviously, it closes some of the distance between Alice and her mother, uniting them in the common cause of outrage at the mistreatment of their gender. In Victorian England, it was, as we now know, common for the term 'hysteria' to be applied to women who did not follow societal rules and patriarchal expectations, and, in application, a diagnosis used to imprison and lobotomize 'difficult' women (Showalter 1993). The appearance of the madhouse here reflects, again, Disney's awareness of the savviness of its youthful (or not) audience. It also references Disney's other, recent Alice project: the *Once Upon a Time in Wonderland* series, in which Alice is, for years, institutionalized, convinced that her adventures in Wonderland are hysterical hallucinations. Disney's ability to create an interconnected, self-referential body of work is, as always, unparalleled² (see Heatwole 2016), but, more importantly, this places Alice squarely at the center of a trans-media feminist history, which has been constantly rewritten and reconsidered—until now. This interlude provides a semi-linear timeline of Disney's revision of Alice, again posing *Looking-Glass* as its final chapter.

Throughout the film, Alice is reminded constantly that she cannot change the past. Her attempt to aid or communicate with the characters'

²Notably, in Disney's 1985 film *Return to Oz*, a pre-pubescent, turn-of-the-century Dorothy Gale is also institutionalized for her 'hysterical' fantasies. Rather than a lobotomy, Dorothy is threatened with shock treatment before being whisked back to a fractured Oz which she must help to save. At the end of the film, now released from the institution, we understand that Dorothy can come and go from Oz as she pleases, and that, interestingly, she has some measure of access to it through her bedroom mirror.

past selves does nothing to alter the course of history—if anything, it threatens the literal fabric of time, which we see crumbling further the longer the Chronosphere is away from its true master. As rust begins to spread outward from the wheels of the great clockwork mechanism that moves time forward, encroaching on the world of Underland and its citizens, Alice is encouraged instead by Time to *learn* from the past, and then leave it behind. The symbolism is heavy-handed: Alice’s heterochronic time is up—she must finally leave Underland for good.

When Alice finally does go back to the real world, she does so with the understanding that she will never return. This is, again, exceptional in the Alice narratives we have seen thus far. Alice and the Hatter share a tender farewell:

Hatter: In the gardens of memory, in the palace of dreams—that is where you and I will meet.

Alice: But a dream is not reality.

Hatter: Who’s to say which is which?

She smiles wistfully, but it does seem that Alice is quite specifically acknowledging the heterotopic nature of Wonderland, and the necessity—if she wants to ultimately move forward with her life—to close the door to it forever. Like Susan Pevensie who, once she discovered boys and began wearing makeup, could not return to Narnia (Lewis 1956), Alice seems to intuitively acknowledge that she has reached a crossroads and, from it, there is no going back. Alice has *finally* passed through her heterotopic crisis, and irrevocably become an adult. In the end, we see her and her mother, a united front, off to seek out real world adventures together, from the practical, grown-up position of owners of their own trading company. They are both banking their domestic futures on the success of their explorations—a compromise to the practical needs of the unceasing movement of linear time, with space made for their more ‘mystical’ endeavors. ‘Time and tide wait for no man,’ says Alice’s mother, walking toward their ship. ‘Or, indeed, woman,’ remarks Alice, joining her. This film ends with no further reference to Underland, no butterfly to signify an unbroken connection. Alice and her mother simply board their boat—the *Wonder*—and depart, the camera panning out to face the open, glittering ocean, and all the mystery it holds.

Alice’s adventures in Wonderland are over—but her real world adventures are just beginning. This seems remarkable considering where we

began. Carroll's child-Alice has long been held up as a face and name for the liminality of feminine existence. Year 2016's transmedia adult Alice has achieved her Wonderland goals, completed various rites of passage, and exited Wonderland forever, becoming something that was once deemed impossible for child-Alice: a fully fledged, agentic subject. What is more, her success has not been dependent on her masculinization, but rather, an embrace of domestic relationships and the traditionally feminine role of the healer. While this plot twist is unique for Alice, it is not unique for Disney: *Frozen* and *Moana* similarly revolve around restoring familial bonds and prioritizing empathy and intuition over physical action. The criticisms leveled against previous Alice renditions (too silly, too sexualized, too masculine) and previous Disney heroines (too focused on romance, too self-sacrificing, too physically unrealistic) seem to have been taken into account and corrected. Disney is paying attention.

Where does that leave heterotopic Wonderland? Closed. It has served its purpose, and its entrant has come through her crisis and emerged on the other side. But for other, future Alices, there will inevitably be Wonderlands at the ready. Alice seems to experience rebirths along with major cultural shifts—take, for example, her association with psychedelia during the massive changes of the 1960s. Perhaps the closure of this Wonderland means that we are at the end of changes we have only begun to understand—particularly for young women. But where youthful crisis erupts again, Alice will be, acting, as Foucault says, as a 'shadow self' to give visibility to our own discursive issues and desires. Alice has always been a feminine mirror, a chance for us to reflect on the values and concerns surrounding the girl—but now, it seems, she has graduated.

And perhaps the Alice of the Burton/Bobin series has not given up on heterotopias after all. Foucault closes his essay on heterotopia with a final example: the boat. This 'heterotopia par excellence' is, according to Foucault, 'a floating piece of space, a place without a place, that exists by itself, that is closed in on itself and at the same time is given over to the infinity of the sea [...] the greatest reserve of the imagination' (1986, 27). Perhaps Alice's crisis is complete, but we may imagine her moving endlessly from space to space, in a world without time, from adventure to adventure, never truly giving herself over to the mundanity of reality. Importantly, though, it will be Alice's *choice*: rather than falling down the rabbit hole or being enticed by the mirror-world, Alice is finally in control. 'Alice' is now a name for the potentialities of both the girl of the books and the woman on our screens. It will be interesting to see what she does next.

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Through a Darker Looking Glass: Alice's Adventures in Horrorland

Lindsey Scott

Lewis Carroll's Alice stories have inspired numerous adaptations through the looking glass, but darker transformations utilizing the conventions of horror have become more prolific in the last two decades. Twenty-first-century Alices, followed down the rabbit hole by children and adults, fight for their survival in topsy-turvy realms where dreams become nightmares, children kill children, and monsters surface as terrifying doubles of the real-life dangers waiting in the everyday world. These darker retellings coincide with the ways in which horror has become 'increasingly mainstreamed in popular culture' (Abbott and Jowett 2013, 17), with bestsellers in children's and young adult fiction 'traffick[ing] heavily in gothic horror' (McCort 2016, 9) to attract their respective audiences. Such practices also reveal how examples of contemporary horror, particularly in the forms of film and television, blur the boundaries between child and adult discourses, raising questions over audience suitability and transforming associated roles for children within the genre.

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This chapter explores three twenty-first-century screen appropriations through their allusions to Carroll's *Alice in Wonderland*—Guillermo del Toro's *Pan's Labyrinth* (2006); *The Hunger Games* (2012) directed by Gary Ross and based on Suzanne Collins' novel (2008); and the Duffer Brothers/Netflix Original series, *Stranger Things* (2016–)—to consider the increasingly fluid intersections between horror and children's popular culture in works that attract both young and adult audiences. Julie Sanders' term appropriation, although typically applied to sustained narrative reworkings of literary texts, is useful for addressing the rich intertextual relationships each rewriting displays with its Carrollian universe, as well as how 'actions of interpolation and critique' can occur through generic shifts (2016, 35). These horror hybrids engage dynamically with Carroll's text alongside a range of other cross-media sources, inviting, through their intertextuality and transgenericism (Ross and Stein 2008), new reflections on Carroll's novel and its 'quasi-Gothic' appearance (Bridgwater 2003, 99). Wonderland is 'a dreamscape always teetering on the brink of nightmare,' and Alice, as the dreamer, is 'liberated from the sense making strictures' of the everyday world (Bye 2018, 34). Transporting twenty-first-century incarnations deeper into the realms of horror expands the agentic potential of the child, destabilizing adult authority and conventional roles for children within the horror genre. Following a reassessment of the generic complexities of *Alice in Wonderland*, this chapter examines how each appropriation mobilizes the text's thematic interest in permeable boundaries and transformative spaces, reconfiguring Carroll's dream-child to interrogate social and cultural hierarchies through horror's subversive power.

Alice in Wonderland is widely regarded as a rite of passage for child readers entering the world of literary imagination, with scholars celebrating Carroll's intention to write for children 'with a scholastic and total absence of didacticism' (Smith Chalou 2007, 75). This decision is first apparent when Alice follows the White Rabbit and shows no concern for any potential dangers lurking underground. Instead, the shelves, maps, and pictures lining the tunnel walls are a curiosity, and after talking, imagining, and reflecting, she lands 'upon a heap of sticks [...] not a bit hurt' (Carroll 1989, 19) to begin her adventures in Wonderland. Alice's fall commences what Richard Jenkyns describes as 'the most purely child-centred book ever written' (2011) and the first seminal work produced in the 'golden age' of children's literature, with the story's critical acclaim often being linked to its pivotal position in the genre's development

(Susina 2010, 9). Before Carroll, stories for children sought to replace 'the horrifying and immoral "adult" genre of Gothic fiction' (Kérchy 2016, 94), instead focusing on the improvement and education of their young readers. Anna Jackson, Karen Coats, and Roderick McGillis discuss *Wonderland* through its relationship with didactic fiction and the Gothic:

Curiously, Alice disappears down a hole into a world which seems to invite exactly the same kind of psychoanalytic reading that the Gothic genre as a whole insistently calls for. All the same, *Alice in Wonderland* is not a Gothic text. Instead, the logic that is so displaced in this world, the morals and manners that are overturned, belong to the didactic texts that had been designed to take the Gothic story's place. When the genre of didactic narrative is turned back on itself, and indeed turned upside down and inside out, the result is not a return to the Gothic stories children used to read before children's literature was invented, but the beginning of a new children's literature tradition, the tradition to which all subsequent children's literature belongs. (2009, 3)

In this account, *Wonderland* is not to be understood as a Gothic text, but, rather, as one that parodies and overturns the didactic tales which served to replace Gothic stories. However, what becomes apparent through such reflections are the ways in which Carroll's text serves both as a rejection of the Gothic (because of its self-conscious parodying of the didactic novel that replaced it) and as a reassessment of its conventions, since, in vanquishing Gothic's successor, it creates space for what was repressed to return, albeit in another form. According to Anna Kérchy, Carroll's *Alice* stories 'did not become Gothic texts per se,' but 'recycled a fair amount of Gothic generic features, most prominently the destabilization of the boundary between waking life and nightmarish fantasy tormenting the dreamer with the fear of losing one's way, mind, and self-identity' (2016, 94). Darker appropriations of Carroll's *Wonderland* invite us to consider how the text moves beyond this recycling, turning its Gothic elements 'upside down and inside out' in the same way that it overturns the didactic children's narrative. With its allusions to German fairytales, the story has often been regarded as presenting a 'Gothic edge' (Bridgwater 2003, 99), but its reconfiguration of the form makes Gothic itself uncanny, at once both familiar and strange.

In terms of genre, Carroll's *Wonderland* is usually regarded as fantasy, but its dreamworld reconfigures the Gothic in several important ways. The

seemingly unending tunnel of the rabbit hole, described as ‘a very deep well’ where it is ‘too dark to see anything’ (Carroll 1989, 17–18), is notably suited to Gothic’s labyrinthine spaces, its preoccupation with interiority, and the dangers of plunging too far into the self. However, what is missing from Alice’s fall (and indeed from many other Gothic elements found within this story) is the component usually accompanying it: namely, a sense of fear or dread. With its child protagonist plummeting ‘Down, down, down’ toward ‘the centre of the earth’ (18), Carroll’s story alludes to ‘that staple of Gothic, the underground vault in which the terrified victim is left to rot’ (Bridgwater 2003, 101). But the staple and its intended impact are overturned when Alice is not frightened by her fall into darkness. Instead, her slow and curious descent leads her to consider that she will now ‘think nothing of tumbling down-stairs’ or falling ‘off the top of the house’ (Carroll 1989, 18). This, of course, is one of the text’s greatest pleasures. While a child reader may perceive Alice’s journey down the rabbit hole as frightening, crossing a boundary into the unknown is not accompanied by an authorial instruction to feel fear or experience punishment. Instead, it is a journey marked by forms of questioning, transformation, and self-empowerment: “‘How brave they’ll all think me at home!’” Alice declares (18). Such practices suggest an overturning of the cautionary strategy often found within Gothic tales, where warnings of the dangers of social and moral transgression are presented ‘in their darkest and most threatening form’ (Botting 1996, 7).

The ‘Gothic edge’ *Wonderland* presents can be interpreted as a positive reworking of Gothic conventions in children’s literature, one that affirms the ongoing connection between Gothic and children’s fiction that has existed ‘since their inception’ (Buckley 2019, 17). As Chloé Buckley argues, ‘children’s literature and culture have always been a significant location for the development of the Gothic’ (18), and this development includes, rather than excludes, the *Alice* texts. Despite frequent efforts to erase Gothic from the corridors of children’s literature, Carroll’s *Wonderland* plays with the conventions of didactic novels and Gothic fiction, ensuring these ‘non-compatible’ genres continue to interrogate one another in meaningful ways. In a similar fashion, the appropriations discussed below combine the ‘incompatible’ discourses of Gothic horror and children’s fiction, often provoking criticism due to their adult content and perceived unsuitability for young viewers, yet mobilizing their Carrollian intertext to transform generic boundaries and empower their child protagonist.

Of these appropriations, *Pan's Labyrinth* [*El laberinto del fauno*] might be considered the most unsuitable for a young audience, given its R rating, explicit violence, and striking portrayal of 'the horror of a specific historical reality' (Diestro-Dópidio 2017, 18). Yet ironically, del Toro's film bears the most visible and sustained relationship with children's literature and fairytales, blending its intertextuality seamlessly within a landscape Charles Derry terms 'political horror' (2009, 324). Although the film has garnered significant critical acclaim since its release, early reviewers struggled with its intertextuality and generic hybridity which did not comply with the expectations of either child or adult audiences. One of the ways reviewers attempted to manage such non-conformity was to co-opt the genres previously associated with childhood. As Jennifer Orme explains, those who discussed the tensions in *Pan's Labyrinth* between the 'real' world of post-civil-war Spain and Ofelia's (Ivana Baquero) 'unreal' world of the Underground Realm refer to the film 'primarily as a fairy tale for adults' (2010, 224). However, del Toro's film redefines horror conventions through the tropes of children's literature in much the same way as the Gothic has, leaving its own legacy on subsequent horror texts written and produced for young audiences, as well as those intended for adults.¹

In positing this view, it is useful to consider Alice's reading of the 'Jabberwocky' poem in *Through the Looking Glass*. Holding up the book to a mirror, Alice hopes she will be able to understand the poem's meaning, as 'the words will all go the right way again' (1989, 133). However, the reversal of the words does not provide her with understanding. Instead, after reading, Alice declares: 'Somehow it seems to fill my head with ideas—only I don't exactly know what they are!' (134). This displacement of logic and subsequent invitation to autonomous thinking can be found at the heart of del Toro's film, for in order to provide the viewer with meaningful interpretations, what stands as logic must first be discarded and a state of unknowing embraced. In this sense, the film itself acts as a kind of portal or threshold, inviting audiences to cross over into a darker version of Carroll's tale which requires a reassessment of the divisions between child and adult, fairytale and horror, fantasy and reality. Rereading

¹ Evy Varsamopoulou comes closest to addressing these complexities in *Pan's Labyrinth*, suggesting that 'a children's film, when viewed by adults, might have the power to teach adult viewers how to read a movie from the perspective of the child viewer in order to reanimate the power of imaginative perception' (2019, 247).

Wonderland through the looking glass of del Toro's film allows us to consider why we often choose to perceive horror separately from creativity, or more specifically, from the creativity of childhood.

In *Pan's Labyrinth*, Ofelia's fantastical world is considerably darker than Alice's, but no less positive in terms of her journey toward self-empowerment and just as 'real' as the horrors inflicted by her fascist stepfather, Captain Vidal (Sergi López). When Ofelia travels with her mother, Carmen (Ariadna Gil) toward their new home, she reads a book of fairytales and pauses at a picture of a young girl whose silhouette resembles John Tenniel's famous illustrations of Alice. Carmen says she does not understand why her daughter had to bring so many books, but Ofelia's love of fairytales self-consciously parodies Alice's rejection of her sister's didactic novel, which has 'no pictures' (Carroll 1989, 17) and does nothing to inspire the child's imagination. Instead, Ofelia reads stories with pictures in them (like Carroll's novels, or indeed, del Toro's film), rejecting the preferences made for her by others and following her own choices. When Ofelia receives a gift for her stepfather's party, which her mother assures her will be better than books, she appears costumed as Alice in a new Victorian-style dress, complete with the iconic pinafore. Here, del Toro aligns Ofelia with Alice's rebellious and non-conformist nature, as the dress is soon discarded and muddled beyond repair after she pursues the first of the magical faun's tasks: tackling a monstrous toad. On a metatextual level, the muddled dress symbolizes how del Toro's reimagining of Carroll's story will disregard the clean and wholesome image others have sought to place upon it.² Adult viewers receive, in spectacular fairytale fashion, a cautionary warning that creative potency in children's tales can be considerably darker than the versions they have become accustomed to.

Intertextual references to *Wonderland* erase the line between 'fantasy' and 'reality' in *Pan's Labyrinth*, as rather than being contained to Ofelia's magical realm, they infiltrate both worlds to deconstruct the 'real' world of Franco's Spain. Ofelia's Alice dress is presented to her in preparation for her stepfather's party, a bizarre social affair which darkly parodies the mad Hatter's tea-party, not least through its references to time: 'he had taken

² Significantly, Ofelia's costume, with its matching bow and headband, recalls the conservative version produced by Walt Disney (1951) rather than Tenniel's illustrations. Instead of the iconic blue dress, however, Ofelia's dress is green, symbolizing her connection to the labyrinth and the faun.

his watch out of his pocket, and was looking at it uneasily, shaking it every now and then, and holding it to his ear' (Carroll 1989, 68). For del Toro, a preoccupation with time no longer lies with the musings of fantastical creatures but with the regimented fascist order of Captain Vidal, symbolized by his father's watch and its reminder of 'how a brave man dies.' The film's textual strategies undercut the adult narrative by focalizing events through Carroll's text and the child's perspective, which, like the room on the other side of the looking glass, destabilizes authority through a process of doubling. As Ofelia crosses the borders of the house to enter the ancient world of the labyrinth, Vidal patrols the borders of fascist Spain, penetrating its wilderness to flush out the rebels hiding in the woods. Just as the rebels disrupt Captain Vidal's plans by stealing his keys, fighting his men, and consuming the forbidden rations locked in his food store, Ofelia disrupts their coherence through her actions in the 'fantasy' realm, which also involve searching for keys, battling the frightening Pale Man, and stealing forbidden fruit from his table. As no hierarchy is established between these two worlds, they become equally valid in terms of their ability to offer the viewer meaning. The director presents them 'with the same amount of sincerity and credibility' (Derry 2009, 324), and both worlds deliberately contain scenes of violence and horror.

Ofelia's dark 'fantasies' have a complexity and creative power of their own which serve to deconstruct oppressive patriarchal discourses, including those pertaining to the delusional or fantasist child and a reductive adult/child binary in the horror genre. The film problematizes neat distinctions between horror endings for adults and those intended for children, where adults are typically left 'devoid of full comprehension of the monstrous being,' while 'the true nature of the monster is discovered and its power is usually dissipated' for children (McCort 2016, 11). If we perceive the Captain as the 'true' monster of del Toro's film (and clearly, we are meant to), then he is discovered by Mercedes (Maribel Verdú) and the other antifascist rebels, his power dissipated when she tells him at the moment of his death that his child 'won't even know [his] name.' Interestingly, if there is a 'monstrous' being devoid of full comprehension at the ending of the film, it is the character who goes by 'so many names' and is seen by the child but not the 'all-powerful' adult: the faun.³ If viewers accept the dual importance of both worlds in *Pan's Labyrinth*, then the

³ As Charles Derry observes, 'Although Captain Vidal is an outright villain, the mythological faun Ofelia encounters is by no means a hero' (2009, 327).

mythological faun can also be understood as part of Ofelia herself. Such potent doublings anticipate later horror appropriations of *Wonderland* which foreground questions of power, identity, and monstrosity in their reconfiguration of Carroll's dreamchild.

Elements of horror in the depictions of warfare and the complexities of 'the nature of monstrosity' (Hiltz 2016, 201) are contained also in Suzanne Collins' *Hunger Games* trilogy, although often situated in the realms of dystopian fiction or YA fantasy. The books are frequently associated with the ancient Greek myth of Theseus and the Minotaur, cited as 'the first or primary inspiration' for Collins' series (Martin 2014, 222), but they also bear a significant relationship with the Alice tales, once examined in the wider context of Collins' writing. Before compiling her trilogy, Collins wrote the *Underland Chronicles*, a middle-grade series centering on a child's journey into a strange otherworld below New York City: 'While pondering Lewis Carroll's *Alice in Wonderland*, Collins was struck by the notion that contemporary readers, many of whom were raised in urban environments, may not relate to the book's pastoral setting' (Wiener 2015, 26). *Wonderland's* pastoral qualities, although not appearing in *Underland*, are central to Collins' first series for young adults. The spatial contours of the Games, rather than resembling the dark tunnels of a Gothic castle, directly recall Alice's Wonderland, with its forests, streams, and meadows. These influences are accentuated in Ross's film adaptation, where nature's vivid colors, textures, and sounds are combined with graphic scenes of violence and horror taking place inside the arena.

If Alice is the creator of Wonderland, and Ofelia the creator of the labyrinth, the arena of the Hunger Games is not the creation of Katniss Everdeen (Jennifer Lawrence), although in the beginning, she plays her part in sustaining its inhuman practices by volunteering in the contest as tribute. With her physical and mental energies co-opted by a brutal totalitarian government, Katniss begins her journey into Underland as a cruel inversion of Carroll's dreamchild. A subject of the Capitol's laws, she is required to kill inside the Games, utilizing her creative skills not to unlock doors or solve riddles but to murder other children and teenagers like herself, a horrific act that ultimately stands in the way of her own survival and desired goal of returning home. In startlingly Gothic fashion, Katniss must confront 'her own monstrosity as a creation of the state' (McCort 2016, 14) and risks losing herself inside this dark and threatening maze. By presenting a threat to the protagonist's identity as heroine, *The Hunger Games* demonstrates the limitless power of the state in controlling tributes

to perform brutal acts of violence. As Bruce Martin explains, 'The Capitol's control is not simply over resources and territory, but also over Panem's inhabitants' ability to think critically about alternative possibilities beyond their current conditions' (2014, 224). This subject matter left many readers and viewers deeply divided on whether *The Hunger Games* was suitable material for its intended audiences. If the child is perceived as a symbol of a hopeful future, as is often the case in adult texts, then the series presents one of the most frightening dystopian visions of the twenty-first century which clearly reflects contemporary socio-political anxieties in a post 9/11 world.

However, Katniss *transforms* inside the Games, appropriating this pastoral realm of horror as a transitional space for acquiring autonomy, resilience, and resistance. The iconic blue dress becomes a red gown of flames in the opening ceremony, earning her the memorable name of 'Girl on Fire' as she presents herself to win the crowd. In a telling inversion of Carroll's tale, Katniss does not descend into the arena as Alice falls into Wonderland: instead, she rises. A fifteen-second spell of darkness is followed by an abrupt ejection from the cylinder into the open air, where she must stand newly weaponized in the blinding sunlight. Like Ofelia escaping to the human world as Princess Moanna, Katniss' entrance recalls Plato's cave, only here, acquiring knowledge is reliant upon a mastery of deception. As well as having to kill to survive, Katniss must hide her emotions inside the Games, amending her behavior in accordance with the panoptic surveillance of the Capitol and her awareness that she is always being watched. However, as a survival strategy, Katniss utilizes her skills as hunter and forager along with her knowledge of the Capitol's constructed reality. Like Alice, she asks questions of herself and reflects on what others present and perceive as 'real,' determined to look beneath the surface to 'learn more about the impossible' (Bye 2018, 34).

Alice exudes both 'calmness and perspective' (Bridgwater 2003, 99) as she navigates her underground labyrinth, and her ability to work through uncertainties and recognize the deceptions of others sets her apart from Gothic heroines who are in danger of losing themselves in their strange surroundings. Katniss also finds ways to remain calm and think practically inside the Games, even in moments of great danger. Instead of fighting the other tributes to obtain weapons for battle, she utilizes her knowledge of the reality show in which she now participates, overturning her position as horror victim or victim-turned-monster to shape her own survival. To win the Games, Katniss adopts strategies which enable her to dupe her

audiences, employing the tactics of subterfuge she has observed in others to gain what she needs from sponsors. In this way, she negotiates multiple identities as a form of self-empowerment, performing the Capitol's penchant for deception to reclaim possession of her physical and mental self.

To empower those who follow Katniss' story, *The Hunger Games* also adopts and transforms horror conventions through its allusions to Carroll's tale. As Katniss hides from her human assailants, she is attacked by the Capitol's monstrous mutations in the form of tracker jackers, genetically engineered wasps with a deadly venom known to be poisonous. The venom causes powerful hallucinations that drive people to madness, but, as any informed reader of Carroll's story knows, a state of madness in Wonderland can also mean imaginative freedom. As the Cheshire-Cat reminds Alice, 'We're all mad here' (Carroll 1989, 64), and from this moment comes one of Katniss' most effective survival strategies: she sets the tracker jackers on her opponents. Failing to escape wholly unscathed, Katniss finds herself in a hallucinogenic state. A series of distorted camera images convey her mounting sense of horror, at which point she sees Caesar (Stanley Tucci) strolling through the woods, his dazzling suit and tall blue hair rendering him a bizarre version of the mad Hatter. But in this fearful state of liminality, Katniss acquires knowledge which will shape the development of her story across the trilogy. She retrieves the bow and arrows from her fallen opponent, and Peeta Mellark (Josh Hutcherson), whom she thought had turned against her, instructs her to run, thus saving her life. Such encounters demonstrate how knowledge and agency can be acquired through experiencing forms of horror, validating the position of the genre within young adult fiction and opening the gate for darker appropriations of Carroll's text.

A kind of Wonderland for adult audiences is presented also in the phenomenally successful Netflix series *Stranger Things*, which creates a rabbit hole that transports viewers back to a glossier version of a decade many of them knew as children. The show's intertextual references span a broad range of eighties pop culture, opening endless portals to other textual worlds which bolster the series' transmedia storytelling and recreate the decade's popular aesthetic for reflection and critique. These nostalgic pleasures have contributed to the series' status as 'decidedly adult' (Alston 2016) for many scholars and fans, its horror content and mature themes closing the gate on the show's younger audiences. However, *Stranger Things* focuses its narratives on the lives of a group of teenagers and part of the show's success is its broad appeal across generational cohorts (Scott

2021, 45). Each season merges elements of science fiction, horror, teen drama, and children's popular culture, blending a host of horror intertexts seamlessly with references to children's literature and film, including Carroll's *Wonderland* and its various adaptations.

Unlike *The Hunger Games*, *Stranger Things* contains overt and implicit references to Carroll's novels, rewarding dedicated fans for their Easter-egg hunting through a series of embedded textual echoes and allusions. In the show's opening season, a group of pre-adolescent boys search for their missing friend Will (Noel Schnapp) who vanishes down a more frightening rabbit hole and becomes trapped in a parallel world known as the Upside Down. During their search, they encounter a twenty-first-century incarnation of Alice who goes by the name of Eleven. Millie Bobby Brown who plays the part first appeared on screen as Alice in the ABC television series *Once Upon a Time in Wonderland* (2013–2014). The song 'White Rabbit' plays in the diner when a group of agents chasing her show up unexpectedly, and in a later episode, a picture of Tenniel's White Rabbit hangs on the wall in Eleven's bedroom, a room inside her mother's house which she has never seen, due to her abduction by the show's leading scientist at Hawkins Laboratory, Dr Brenner (Matthew Modine). Beyond these explicit references, the show destabilizes the boundary between the 'real' world of Hawkins and the 'fantasy' realm of the Upside Down, a nightmare world which, like the arena in *The Hunger Games*, is a space filled with terror and monsters. Eleven plays her part in opening the Gate to the Upside Down, although, like Katniss, it is an act she is driven to perform by those who seek to control her. As each season develops, the overlappings between Hawkins and the Upside Down become more apparent. Portals open anywhere to this terrifying version of Wonderland, and Carroll's underground tunnel, transformed through intertextual allusions to noted horror films such as Ridley Scott's *Alien* (1979), serves as a repeated visual motif across the series.

Like Ofelia, Eleven faces monsters in the 'fantasy' world and an oppressive patriarch in the human world with whom she must do battle in order to negotiate her independence as the text's dreamchild. Dr Brenner, like Captain Vidal, is another version of the evil stepfather. In the absence of a mother, Eleven initially relies on him, calling him 'Papa' and accepting his repressive adult authority. Eleven is the product of a violent, power-driven society, her telekinetic and telepathic abilities created through a series of scientific experiments and nurtured only to serve her purpose as a biological weapon. In *Wonderland*, Alice notes the importance of 'pictures and

conversations' in a book that would stimulate her imagination (1989, 17), but, for Eleven, the pictures and conversations she must seek out belong to America's political enemies. Rather than being driven by curiosity, it is the burning curiosity of men like Dr Brenner that Eleven ultimately serves, prompted to act as a spy by their desire for power and control. In a traumatic scene which recalls Alice's beloved cat Dinah, Eleven, under the watchful eye of Dr Brenner, attempts to use her powers to hurt a cat trapped in a cage. The sequence evokes an image of the hunter turned hunted, seen in Alice's sleepy reversal, 'Do bats eat cats?' (19). For failing to kill the cat with the power of her mind, Eleven is dragged down another tunnel and thrown into an isolation room, at which point she kills the two guards imprisoning her and finally receives a 'loving' embrace from Papa.

Such processes, as seen in the *Hunger Games* trilogy, prompt a deeper assessment of the child's subjectivity through Eleven's constructed position as 'monster.' Just as Alice repeatedly asks who she is as she tries to understand what is happening to her, Eleven must also ask the same question once she escapes from the Lab. While Alice finds it 'quite natural [...] talking familiarly' with those she meets in her 'queer-looking party' (Carroll 1989, 31), Eleven is silent when she first meets Mike (Finn Wolfhard), Lucas (Caleb McLaughlin), and Dustin (Gaten Matarazzo), also known as 'The Party.' This silence, coupled with Dr Brenner's ruthless appropriation of her powers, has contributed to some critics reading Eleven as a blank slate for the patriarchal construction of female identity (Gackstetter Nichols 2019). However, we soon discover that Eleven's silence is an act of choice: 'Oh, so you can speak,' says Mike after she talks when they're alone. If Eleven is silent for many of these early scenes, she still, like Alice, finds ways to communicate with herself and the viewer, using the power of her imagination. Eleven 'speaks' to the show's audiences via a series of flashbacks, which, like Ofelia's 'fantasies,' disrupt the master narrative of each episode, transporting the viewer to another time and space in Eleven's memories. In doing so, her ability to communicate privately with the audience mimics her psychic abilities (Scott 2021, 51), forging an intimate connection between herself and viewers of the show. This metatextual presentation of her power represents Eleven's ability to reject the identities others construct for her, as she learns she is not the monster for opening the Gate to the Upside Down and goes on to discover how to connect her powers to her own thoughts and emotions. This does not involve a relinquishing of power, as is often the case in conservative versions of the occult horror narrative. Instead, following Carroll's

protagonist, Eleven embraces her abilities by learning not to be afraid. As Catherine Elick notes of Alice's response to the animals who attack her when she grows beyond human size: 'Anger, more than fear, appears to motivate her' (2015, 40). Learning how to channel her anger in the show's second season and turn it into a strength, Eleven is able to return to Hawkins to close the Gate to the Upside Down and face her own Jabberwock, the Mind Flayer.

Children have always served as a convenient symbol of hope in adult fictions, representing innocence, idealism, and our potential futures in the hands of the next generation. They are often used to signify adult fears or desires, whether these relate directly to the lives, interests, and behaviors of real children or not. Attached to this is the reality that adult authors are empowered to speak on behalf of children in literature, a paradox that sits at the heart of any work written by an adult and featuring a child protagonist, including Carroll's stories. Such contradictions come into sharper focus when the fantasy realms of the dreamchild become nightmares in contemporary versions of Carroll's *Wonderland* and children speak out about the world's real nightmares on behalf of adults. When Greta Thunberg stood at the 2019 UN climate action summit in New York and told world leaders, 'you have stolen my dreams and my childhood with your empty words,' she reminded those listening that she should be in school, not standing in the place of politicians: 'Yet you all come to us young people for hope? How dare you!' Media narratives, like their fictional counterparts, position children as their main protagonists, relying on the actions of Thunberg and other youth activists to drive the 'fairytales of eternal economic growth' they are so desperately seeking to challenge.

On one level, it seems possible to suggest that the appropriations discussed in this chapter, through their merging of children's literature and more adult forms of Gothic horror, serve as complex collective expressions of adult desires to positively empower children, to adjust to their evolving social roles, and to combat feelings of guilt over their placement in a frightening, topsy turvy world. However, a further process of deciphering is required if, like Alice's reading of the Jabberwocky poem, these appropriations are to become meaningful *outside* of adult perspectives. In attempting to do so, this chapter ends with a reminder of *Through the Looking Glass*, where Alice imagines that she takes the place of the boy in the poem, appearing in Tenniel's illustration to do battle against the Jabberwock (Carroll 1989, 135). At the time Carroll was writing

Wonderland, ‘prevailing medical associations of childhood imagination and dream-states with mental illness’ threatened to violate the frontiers of children’s fantasies (Schatz 2015, 96). However, Carroll ‘links his “dream-child” with “wonder,” that is, an expression of creativity, ingenuity, and complexity’ (96). It is this expression of creativity, ingenuity, and complexity that serves to transform the potency of the dreamchild in the contemporary examples of Gothic horror discussed within this chapter. Discussing how girls often receive less encouragement than boys to pursue their dreams, Deborah Ross argues that the Alice books invite girls ‘to fantasize in a way that was far from typical’ in girls’ fiction of the period (2000, 210). *Pan’s Labyrinth*, *The Hunger Games*, and *Stranger Things* all feature ‘far from typical’ female protagonists who fight for their freedom in a decade when youth activists stormed the arena of politics under the close scrutiny of global media to battle the real-life horrors of climate change. These texts explore the agency of the twenty-first-century dream-child for the deliberation of young and adult audiences, and, in doing so, offer rebellious female protagonists who, in following Alice’s lead, reveal themselves not to be ‘mad,’ but as pursuing forms of empowerment that will ensure their own survival.

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Alice's Evolution: *Chicago 70* and the Revolutionary Awakening of Lewis Carroll's Victorian Heroine

Andrew Grossman

In the popular imagination, Lewis Carroll's *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* (1865) and *Through the Looking-Glass, and What Alice Found There* (1871) are more than literary caprices: they represent the triumph of rebellious imagination over staid convention, the victory of private reverie over Victorian propriety. Not merely eccentric satires of 'unreasonable' English Reason, the *Alice* works have become cultural touchstones for every new generation tempted by the curiosities of childhood and confounded by the paradoxes of adulthood. But the works' extreme popularity has diluted their meanings, especially as countless adaptations merely

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illustrate Alice's odysseys, without variation, insight, or critique.¹ Careless cultural allusions have further familiarized Carroll's *bizarceries*. The phrases 'down the rabbit hole' and 'through the looking glass' are now catch-all expressions, cavalierly used to signify anything alien, perverse, or incomprehensible. Carroll's dreamworld never aspires to inscrutability, however; like Freudian dreaming, it portends a gateway to inquiry, discovery, and self-reflection.

Confronted with Wonderland's inverted discourse and perverted characters, Alice quickly discovers that her budding Victorian education is ill-equipped to deal with obstinate irrationality. Yet the chaos of Wonderland does not arise from nothing. As the product of Victorian imaginations—those of Carroll and his heroine—the dreamworld only reflects the culture of its creators. The stubbornness and rigidity of Wonderland's residents are symptoms of Victorian virtues. The child-abusing Duchess ('Speak roughly to your little boy / And beat him when he sneezes') is nothing less than an extroverted caricature of the violently repressed emotions endemic to the Victorian family (Carroll 2004, 71). The draconian threats voiced by the Queen of Hearts mirror a waking world in which English royalty precipitated imperialist violence across the globe—the Second Opium War and the 1857 Indian Rebellion occurred shortly before Carroll wrote *Alice in Wonderland*. As it satirizes the reckless violence wrought by Victorianism's patterns of domestic repression and royalist aggression, Carroll's dreamworld becomes more 'realistic'—or at least less symbolically coded—than Freud's. In psychoanalysis, one decodes symbols to unearth repressed wishes or traumas, but Alice's visions do not neurotically recode her own anxieties. On the contrary, her dreamworld grotesquely exposes the illogic of an *external* world far more unfathomable than her own psyche.

The adult world absent in Alice's waking life (re)appears in Wonderland, but in perverted, incomprehensible forms. As a young girl without a critical consciousness, Alice takes Wonderland literally, imposing her fledgling notions of 'adult' reason upon a world that, like much of Victorian culture, is characterized by rationalizations. As Carroll scholar Donald Rackin says, 'Alice's assumptions are typically no more than her elders' operating premises, which she maintains with a doctrinaire passion that is almost a

¹ For instance, Norman McLeod's *Alice in Wonderland* (1933), William Sterling's *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* (1972), and the 1951 Disney film merely illustrate an already-familiar narrative.

caricature of immature credulity' (1977, 394). Alice believes that language can make her understand and be understood, but Wonderland's so-called adults, in their various animalistic and anthropomorphic (dis)guises, only use language to distort, equivocate, and fabulize.

Filled with solipsistic characters unable to engage in dialectical relationships, Wonderland constitutes a static, ahistorical universe. Its inhabitants' overtures to mathematics, time-keeping, and familial and political relationships are empty parodies of discourse that exist only in the present tense, never alluding to historical contexts or potential futures. Wonderland's uncommunicative, 'present-tense' residents can never mature, and neither can Alice—until she finally rebels against the dream-world's illogic. Adult readers will likely focus on moments when Alice exhibits incipient signs of maturation and starts to see herself not as a passive vessel but as an active historical agent. In *Alice's* fourth chapter, 'The Rabbit Sends in a Little Bill,' the protagonist finds herself growing far too quickly after quaffing a potion, and, not coincidentally, begins questioning her own identity and future. Self-consciously, she compares herself to a fairytale character ('There ought to be a book written about me') and, as she magically grows, asks herself, 'Shall I never get any older than I am now?' (Carroll 2004, 45) In the novel's climactic chapter, 'Alice's Evidence,' Alice finally grows 'to her full size'—intellectually as well as physically—and defiantly shouts 'Stuff and nonsense!' when the Queen of Hearts barks, 'Sentence first—verdict afterwards' (Carroll 2004, 140). In this belated moment of rebellion, Alice discovers her own voice, declaring her tormentors 'nothing but a pack of cards' rather than bowing to their irrational authority (Carroll 2004, 140).

Like all children, Alice would eventually grow up—not speedily through a magical potion but gradually through inexorable life experience. Most psychoanalytic accounts of Alice focus on her present state, about the age of the real Alice Liddell when Carroll first invented the tales. Within this framework, Alice is a confused prepubescent girl, ignorant of politics, misapplying her limited understanding of logic to an uncanny, unjust world. But if Alice is truly a universal or 'relatable' character, could we reimagine her at later stages of psychosocial development? If her relevance spans centuries, could we see her not as a sheltered Victorian girl destined for domesticity but as a potential young adult armed with a budding sociopolitical consciousness? And if this 'matured' Alice were thrust into the late twentieth century, would she see that her dreams reflect a violent, chaotic adult world only pretending to rationality?

Though such questions might seem odd, they actually complete the psychoanalytic critiques to which Alice has sometimes been subjected. If Carroll's relentless images of transformation and growth suggest Alice's own oncoming maturation, we should ask how, exactly, Alice might *continue* to grow after waking from her reverie. Would she, ten years later, strap on a constricting corset and bow to the *pater familias*? Or would her dreams enlighten and liberate her? When she rebels against the oppressive courtly proceedings in 'Alice's Evidence,' has she also learned how to emancipate herself in reality? As the waking Alice grows into an adolescent, would she advocate universal suffrage? Would she openly read Wollstonecraft's *A Vindication of the Rights of Women* (1792)?

By no accident does Alice's political revolt in 'Alice's Evidence' climax her dream state and wake her into reality. Carroll's *Alice* duology enjoyed a cultural revival in the late 1960s not simply because its psychedelic aspects dovetailed with hippie culture. Countercultural youth movements eager to claim literary touchstones for their politics saw in Alice a heroine poised for emancipation and in Wonderland a reflection of the warlike 'adult' society they abhorred. The rampant egoism and reckless violence of Wonderland's adults are hardly quaint; in reality, such qualities were found in the authoritarian leaders then waging war in Southeast Asia. Carroll's satire also was accessible to nearly every audience. Hippies did not have to grasp the particular Victorian targets of Carroll's ridicule to understand *Alice* as a revolt against all manner of repressive conservatism.

Hippie-era cinema abounded with psychedelic *Alice* adaptations and pastiches, including Jonathan Miller's *Alice in Wonderland* (1966), Jean-Christophe Averty's *Alice au Pays des Merveilles* (1970), and Alain Robbe-Grillet's *Eden and After* (1970). Most films within this trend, however, avoid political critique or merely evince vague countercultural aesthetics. An exception is Kerry Feltham's *Chicago 70* (1970), a mostly forgotten work of agitprop first mounted onstage by the Toronto Workshop. Alternately known as *The Great Chicago Conspiracy Circus*, the film interpolates elements of *Alice in Wonderland*—namely the chapters 'Who Stole the Tarts?' and 'Alice's Evidence'—into a reenactment of the infamous 'Chicago 7' trial. As it transplants a Victorian text into a cinematic piece of agitprop, the film's transmediality, which is obvious enough, becomes less significant than its *transmodality*, if we see Carroll's literary caprice and the film's agitprop as distinct *modes* or *genres* of expression. Though it 'adapts' elements of a literary classic, *Chicago 70* is obviously not a

standard adaptation. Likewise, the term 'appropriation' falls short of capturing the film's subversiveness, even if the film does literally borrow Carrollian elements. More accurately, *Chicago 70* manipulates *Alice in Wonderland*, much as plastic artists manipulate 'found objects' and graft them into new wholes.

As it dismantles and manhandles *Alice* for its own ends, *Chicago 70* engages Brechtian practices of defamiliarization, making us acutely aware of riven texts 'as texts,' not as foundations for naturalistic or even coherent performances. While it plants Carroll's 'Alice' in the late twentieth century, the film is distinct from adaptations that modernize a literary chestnut but nevertheless adhere to what Bakhtin described as chronotopic narrative, in which '[s]patial and temporal indicators [...] are fused into one carefully thought-out, concrete whole' (1981, 84). In a chronotopic schema, characters think and behave according to their culture's practical, generic, and eventually ideological conceptions of time and space, which for Bakhtin are constituted equally and indivisibly. In most adaptations, chronotopic norms tend to hold true even when directors modernize their sources or transpose them to alternate cultures and geographies. Ken Hughes' *Joe Macbeth* (1955), for example, might update Shakespeare to the crude, tough-talking world of modern gangsterism, but its characters still operate according to 'reasonable' modes of spatiotemporal perception within their narrative universe. By contrast, *Chicago 70* places Alice not within an organic, 'concrete whole' but within a diegetically (and logically) unstable arena where the space-time of Wonderland absurdly collides with that of twentieth-century American politics.

The present analysis provides a rare example of what we can call 'contrapuntal' appropriation: rather than trying to approximate, reimagine, or reconfigure Carroll within the norms of narrative cinema, *Chicago 70* has Carroll's world enter into a dialectical confrontation with a second narrative, that of the Chicago 7 trial. Furthermore, this confrontation transpires within an experimental structure that plays by chaotic spatiotemporal rules. If adaptations and appropriations represent a 'contradictory impulse toward dependence and liberation,' as Julie Sanders says, *Chicago 70* clearly lies at the radical end of liberation (2006, 6). Employing Carroll's characters and language as a kind of interruptive commentary on the Chicago 7 trial, the film puts Carroll's text to *critical use*, instead of employing Carroll as a narrativistic anchor. Insofar as the interruptions of Wonderland eventually overtake the trial proceedings, *Chicago 70*

provides a most unusual example of an appropriated text colonizing a primary text—a reversal of the typically exploitative practices of appropriation.

Though it updates elements of *Alice* to the revolutionary era of Bobby Seale and Allen Ginsberg, *Chicago 70*'s overall design should not be confused with the anachronistic practices of *regietheater*, in which directors contemporize a repertoire chestnut for the sake of fashionable 'relevance' (or sheer perversity). In the operatic world especially, *regietheater*, as advanced by directors as diverse as Weiland Wagner, Patrice Chéreau, and Peter Sellars, has acquired a reputation for arbitrary sensationalism, and critics have accused such directors of gratuitously visiting a kind of hermeneutic violence upon their sources. Yet *Chicago 70* is quite the opposite of a trendy revision. Consider, for instance, Chéreau's oft-criticized antifascist updating of Wagner's *Ring* cycle (at the 1976 Bayreuth Centenary), in which the Aryan demigods became the nationalistic overseers of nineteenth-century industrial capitalism. Here, Wagner's historically problematic, humorless work is resuscitated through techniques drawn (more or less) from the repertoire of comedy—anachronism, juxtaposition, incongruity, and so forth. But Chéreau only appropriates comic techniques to place Wagner within a deadly serious irony; never are we meant to see Wagner himself as comic. *Chicago 70*, by contrast, is an authentic satire. Rather than forcibly imposing modernity onto Carroll, the film extrapolates from *Alice* undated themes comically applicable to 1960s American politics. To the degree that contemporary America still persists under pseudo-Victorian moralities, *Chicago 70* reveals the *present* as terribly dated and Carroll as persistently relevant.

The Chicago 7 trial was premade for symbolic treatment, pitting no less than Allen Ginsberg and Black Panther Bobby Seale against Julius Hoffman, a judge who embodied every prejudice of the *ancien regime*. Much as Alice copes with mock-officialdom and a repressive legal system in the chapters 'Who Stole the Tarts?' and 'Alice's Evidence,' the Chicago 7 contended with Hoffman, a reactionary reminiscent of the Queen of Hearts. The Queen's motto 'Sentence first—verdict afterwards' captures the attitudes of Hoffman, who clearly desired a prearranged judgment. Many of his proclamations echo nothing more (nor less) than the Cheshire Cat's serpentine logic and Humpty Dumpty's egoistic bombast (in *Through the Looking-Glass*). For the antiwar generation of the 1960s, Carroll's satires of 'adult' sophistry were especially relevant. During official press briefings on the Vietnam War, twisted, equivocating rhetoric was

the order of the day. In press briefings that Saigon-based journalist Richard Pyle dubbed 'The Five O'clock Follies,' American generals fabricated daily lies about American 'progress' in Vietnam—lies few actually believed.² When generals responded to journalists' questions with evasions and circumlocutions, journalists found themselves in Alice-like positions, knowing authorities were spewing nonsense but having to kowtow to them nonetheless.

Before examining *Chicago 70*, we should briefly recall the chaotic protests surrounding the 1968 Democratic National Convention, which precipitated the Chicago 7 trial. Heavily armed National Guardsmen, deployed under Mayor Daley's orders, outnumbered the antiwar protesters who had surrounded the convention hall. Gravitating toward antiwar candidate Eugene McCarthy, the counterculture opposed Hubert Humphrey and a Democratic Party establishment enthralled to the military-industrial complex. Spearheading the convention protesters was the Youth International Party (Yippies),³ led by provocateurs Abbie Hoffman and Jerry Rubin, who released their own mock-candidate, 'Pigassus' the Pig, into Chicago's Civic Center Plaza. Courting notoriety, or at least publicity, Hoffman and Rubin threatened to spike the local water supply with LSD and dispatch agents to seduce the spouses of convention delegates. Along with antiwar activists Rennie Davis, Tom Hayden, John Froines, David Dellinger, Lee Weiner, and Bobby Seale (later tried separately), Hoffman and Rubin eventually were indicted for crossing state lines to incite riots—an offense charged, ironically, under the antiriot provisions of the 1968 Civil Rights Act.

Chicago 70 begins with a caption: 'A partial record of the trial of the Chicago Seven [...] Every word, laugh and stumble is taken from the trial transcript.' Before the trial proceeds, the characters are introduced in the form of their alter egos—personages from *Alice in Wonderland*, sitting in the jury box. Trial reenactments are regularly interrupted by sequences in which actors reappear as their Wonderland counterparts, repeating

² Daily at 5pm, press officer Barry Zorthian briefed journalists at Saigon's Rex Hotel about alleged American progress in the Vietnam War. Zorthian's statements were so patently false that Pyle, the Associated Press's Saigon Bureau Chief, called the briefings 'The Five O'clock Follies,' a term reused by other Vietnam-based journalists.

³ Not to be confused with hippies—a generic label for pacifistic, countercultural youth—the Yippies were an anarchist revolutionary collective known for guerrilla theater and public provocation. The group's founders included Chicago 7 defendants Jerry Rubin and Abbie Hoffman.

snatches from Carroll as ironic commentary on the absurd legal proceedings. No longer a questing girl, 'Alice' is here represented as a young woman—played by an adult actress, Diane Grant—whose squeaky, child-like voice suggests that she is more than ready to grow up. At first, 'Alice' appears as a juror. Framed in rare close-ups not afforded to other characters, she watches from a distance but becomes more active—both physically and politically—as the trial progresses, interrupting testimonies with antiwar skits and irreverent vaudeville songs. When lawyers begin discussing police brutality at the Democratic Convention, Alice adopts the persona of a teacher and addresses her fellow jurors as though they were her students. She asks: 'Now class, what did we learn in the army?' The other jurors, mocking the thuggish tactics of the National Guardsmen, simply scream, 'Kill!' Interjected jokes eventually will be put aside, however, when Alice and reality dialectically collide in the film's final scenes. While historical personages from the trial occasionally slip into their alternate 'Wonderland' roles, Alice herself makes a contrary journey, beginning as a fictional character (stationed in the jury box) and eventually 'maturing' into real-life activist Linda Morse, a pacifist-turned-revolutionary who testified at the trial (the cross-character transformation is embodied by Grant, who plays both Alice and Linda Morse). At the film's end, 'Alice' grows from the passive spectator of a farcical trial into a politically conscious adult who, through that very consciousness, carries Alice's fantastic rebellion into Vietnam-era America.

Rather than presenting the trial chronologically, the film employs a sketch-like structure, (re)presenting both familiar and unfamiliar episodes through extended long shots on a stagy set. Judge Hoffman is raised unusually high on a mirrored bench—a looking glass, if you will—that opaquely reflects the trial's participants. Through a combination of judicial ineptitude and courtroom provocation, the trial's discourse falls into comic devices common in Carroll's world, such as inversion, juxtaposition, and the reversal of hierarchies (as occurs when dithering Judge Hoffman is schooled by the young defendants). Although it sometimes represents the trial's more notorious events (such as the gagging of Bobby Seale), the film generally avoids reenacting tendentious episodes, instead spotlighting moments that slip into the type of anti-discourse Humpty Dumpty practices in *Through the Looking-Glass*. Aided by actual trial transcripts, personages argue endlessly about the meanings of linguistic signs and referents. Evincing Humpty Dumpty's vanity, Judge Hoffman insists on the rightness of his perceptions and constructs, much as the egoistic

egg claims that a word 'means just what I choose it to mean—neither more nor less' (Carroll 2004, 219). In one telling sequence, the Judge upbraids a defense witness for smoking a pipe in the courtroom when he was merely holding the pipe. In the ensuing dialogue, defense attorney William Kunstler and the prosecutor are also dragged into the fray:

- Judge Hoffman:* You just sit there and answer the questions ... I will still give you the protection of the United States District Court, which we accord every witness ...
- Witness:* Thank you very much.
- Judge Hoffman:* ... even when they come in smoking pipes!
- Witness:* I was not smoking a pipe!
- Kunstler:* That is not true your honor, he was not smoking a pipe!
- Judge Hoffman:* He had a pipe in his mouth!
- Kunstler:* That goes to the heart of what we are doing, your Honor ... You just told the jury, 'Even when he came in smoking a pipe,' when he was not smoking a pipe. Your Honor knows he wasn't smoking a pipe.
- Judge Hoffman:* Don't tell me what I know!
- Kunstler:* He *showed* you the pipe, he had the pipe in his mouth ...
- Judge Hoffman:* He didn't even put it away.
- Kunstler:* This is a lesson for the jury, your Honor, because when you say '*Smoking* a pipe,' you are mistaken, and the jury knows you are mistaken.
- Prosecution Lawyer:* The jury knows very well what you mean by 'smoking a pipe!' He had a pipe in his mouth in a federal district court.
- Kunstler:* There is a vast difference between *smoking* a pipe and ...

The absurd debate recalls Alice's encounter with Humpty Dumpty, who complains that Alice called her an 'egg,' only for Alice to point out that she said he '*looked* like an egg' (Carroll 2004, 214). A relic of more conservative times, Judge Hoffman sometimes falls himself into Alice-like positions, for he is as estranged from hippie-Yippie argot as Alice is from Wonderland double speak. When Judge Hoffman claims to not know what a 'Yippie' is even after three months of hearings, the film suddenly

cuts to a longhaired bohemian who proclaims: 'A Yippie is a hippie who's been busted, is a paid assassin, has permanent chromosome damage [and] is almost always full of shit!' In such moments, the power structure implicit in *Alice* becomes slippery and unstable. Rather than defendants cowering before authority, as Alice usually does in Wonderland, they boldly act as ironic teachers, as does the film's 'Alice' character when sitting in the jury box. These moments of shifting power prepare the film's climax, in which the Alice character, empowered by the rebellious acts she witnesses, matures into the aforementioned Linda Morse.

Perhaps more absurd than the 'pipe' discourse is an infamous incident the film recreates at length: Allen Ginsberg's Sanskrit chanting on the witness stand. Judge Hoffman, nonplussed and bizarrely offended, loses track of his thoughts as he insists that only English be spoken in court. During the exchange, Judge Hoffman becomes defensive, insisting that he is not laughing at Ginsberg's chanting but is rather mystified by it. An ensuing circular dialogue among Hoffman, Ginsberg, and a trial lawyer seems almost ripped from the pages of *Alice*, with the judge insisting that 'the language of the United States District Court is English!' as Ginsberg chants away. The theme of impossible translation—ubiquitous throughout Alice's time in Wonderland—recurs when the trial turns to one of Abbie Hoffman and Jerry Rubin's most famous stunts: the attempt to 'exorcise' the 'satanic' Pentagon by encircling it with chanting hippies. The stunt's absurdity notwithstanding, the judge reminds Abbie Hoffman that it is illegal to measure the Pentagon (to determine how many hippies should encircle it). Realizing how ridiculous it is to even describe the stunt, the judge continues, 'Those are your words, not mine.' An indignant Abbie Hoffman replies: '*None* of these are my words [...] I'm trying to use your words. I don't speak this language [...] I'm trying the best I can to speak your language.' These lines, taken from trial transcripts, could have been spoken by Alice herself.

Blundering through the trial, Judge Hoffman undermines his own authority, implicitly setting the stage for the film's 'Alice' character to mature and seize the political power he has surrendered. Before actress Diane Grant enacts this transformation, however, the film offers a solemn, cruel moment: the gagging of Bobby Seale. The gagging, oddly enough, recalls the 'suppression' of the misbehaving guinea pigs in 'Who Stole the Tarts?'—the animals are stuffed into a bag and sat upon. Seale's silencing is presented surreally, as the film's soundtrack devolves into an audio collage of chaotic trial testimony. Soon, dissonant electronic music overtakes

the collage and two bailiffs approach Seale from behind, bend him backwards, and stuff his neckerchief inside his mouth. Though Seale is materially silenced, the film provides him a ghostly, extradiegetic voice on the soundtrack, as if it were his soul that suddenly screams, 'This mother-fucker's tight, and it's stopping my blood!'

After the Seale incident, *Chicago 70* continues its turn toward sobriety. Diane Grant, the actress posing as 'Alice' in the jury box, now casts off her Alice persona. As she takes the witness stand, Grant (and thus Alice) becomes the twenty-six-year-old Linda Morse, a middle-class Quaker who became an agitationist revolutionary and protested at the People's Park in Berkeley. Recall that troops were deployed in May, 1969, at the behest of then-governor Ronald Reagan to violently suppress a cluster of antiwar activists around the University of California's Berkeley campus. After Morse explains the antiwar protests, the prosecutor inquires about her recent militant training: 'You practiced shooting an M-1 yourself? You also practiced karate?' he asks. 'Yes,' she responds, before initiating a lengthy monologue:

After [witnessing police fire on protestors], I changed from being a pacifist. I realized a nonviolent revolution was impossible. I desperately wish it *was* possible. The People's Park in Berkeley: the policemen shot at us when people were unarmed—[the protestors] were fighting, if you wish, with rocks. The policemen used double-loaded buckshot and rifles and pistols against unarmed demonstrators—that is 'fighting,' okay? The people are fighting for a totally different society—people in the Black communities, in the Puerto Rican communities, in the Mexican communities, and in the white communities [...]

Following her monologue, Grant momentarily reverts to her Alice persona, and in a childlike voice she screams at Judge Hoffman what Alice shouts at the head-chopping Queen: 'Who cares for you? You're nothing but a pack of cards!'

We had asked earlier if we could imagine Alice, that 'eternal' character, not as a naïve Victorian girl but as a maturing young woman, released from the ahistorical stasis of Wonderland and of literature itself. Here, Alice grows beyond her literary origins into an anti-imperialist revolutionary born of the hippie imagination. The film provides the most radicalized incarnation of Alice imaginable, answering in no uncertain terms what might (or should) become of an adventuresome girl who, when pushed to

the limit, discovers her latent rebellious voice. To achieve its thesis, *Chicago 70* admittedly privileges *Alice in Wonderland* over its less ‘revolutionary’ sequel. Yet even in *Through the Looking-Glass*, Alice ultimately realizes that executive authority should be deposed, not revered. When Alice is finally ‘Queened’ in Chapter IX of the second novel, she realizes that the White and Red Queens are even more unhinged than the rest of Wonderland. She then starts to grow uncontrollably—that is, she *outgrows* the two Queens’ royal irrationality, thus reiterating the rejection of callous authority more clearly voiced in the prequel.

Some might argue that *Chicago 70* hermeneutically savages Carroll’s original conception, just as many claimed that Chéreau’s *regietheater* *Ring* perverted Wagner. Others might suggest the filmmakers have taken too far what we had previously called ‘transmodality,’ grafting modern agitprop onto Carroll’s far subtler literary machinery. Yet the underlying theme of rebellion has always been vital in *Alice*. For Donald Rackin, rebellion is more central than the apolitical concerns that often preoccupy *Alice* analyses—chess, semantic and inferential logic, the biographical eccentricities of Charles Dodgson, etc. In Alice’s final declaration that the King and Queen and all the court are nothing but a pack of cards—a sentiment Alice earlier had expressed only to herself—Rackin sees a courageous rebuke of Wonderland’s illogic. Alice’s courtroom rebellion, as Rackin says, constitutes a ‘rejection of mad sanity in favor of the sane madness of ordinary existence’ (1977, 414).

As we evaluate the meaning of Alice’s dreamworld rebellion, we can revisit our original question: What does Alice really learn in Wonderland? Does she truly learn to rebel against capricious authority, or does she, upon waking, merely appreciate the ‘sane madness’ of Victorian mores? If the latter, Alice seems little more than Dorothy spirited home from Oz, cherishing a banal reality previously taken for granted. If her rebellious spirit is dispelled by waking life, her dream odyssey yields no revelation. Contemporary readers—whether 1960s hippies or twenty-first-century post-postmodernists—should hope that Alice actualizes her rebellion, questioning the very real monstrousness of her repressive, antifeminist society. The antiwar movement, which fetishized an insubordinate Alice, could not imagine its heroine acquiescing to the ‘sane madness’ of Victorian repression (on madness in Victorian times see Chap. 9 of this volume). Thus *Chicago 70* accelerates Alice’s evolution, far more radically than any of Wonderland’s elixirs. The film effectively feeds Alice a

cinematic growth potion, one that forces her to supersede her Victorian origins.

The desire to 'push' Alice beyond her own literary history sidesteps the nostalgic coda of *Alice in Wonderland*, in which Alice pledges to 'keep, through all her riper years, the simple and loving heart of her childhood' and regale other children 'with many a strange tale, perhaps even with the dream of Wonderland of long-ago' (Carroll 2004, 144). Carroll's coda tightly seals Wonderland's meanings within a literary framework. The story will be retold across generations but will remain a backwards-looking fable—stuck in 'long-ago'—that cannot transform future lives. The bittersweet tone that concludes *Alice* is part and parcel of Rackin's conventional 'sane madness,' as Alice's memories of Wonderland capitulate to and recuperate the demands of Victorian sentimentalism.

Without some radically imaginative intervention in the manner of *Chicago 70*, Rackin's everyday 'sane madness' seems implacable. Yet the notion of sane madness could be understood differently, not as a state of things as static as Wonderland but as a self-conscious, goal-directed *performance* of madness. Indeed, the counterculture understood that its performative anarchies had overarchingly sane goals. Consider this excerpt from Abbie Hoffman's 1969 satirical polemic, 'TWA Never Gets You There on Time':

We will dye the Potomac red, burn the cherry trees, panhandle diplomats and try to kidnap LBJ while wrestling him to the ground and pulling his pants off [...] Schoolchildren will rip out their desks and throw ink at stunned instructors, office secretaries will disrobe and run into the streets, newsboys will rip up their newspapers and sit on the curbstones masturbating [...] soldiers will throw down their guns. (Raskin 1996, 120)

Underneath the comic provocation lies a foundation of 'sane' humanitarianism. Politicians *should* be denuded, at least ideologically; schoolchildren should have revolted against conservative public education circa 1969; the propagandistic, enervating 'news' of newspapers could well be replaced by utilitarian pleasure-seeking; and soldiers should forsake their arms and become pacifists. The counterculture's notion of anarchic *cum* utopian performance art was hardly a novel idea—its origins can be traced back to the Cynic Diogenes, who argued that the *oikos*, the hierarchical structure of the Greek household, should be replaced by egoless, communitarian lifestyles (Dawson 1992, 113). In harkening back to Diogenic communal

ideals, it may seem that we have digressed from *Alice in Wonderland* and *Chicago 70*. But recall the primary failing of Wonderland's residents: self-centeredness and self-absorption. Beginning at a point of extreme egocentricity, the main characters—the Caterpillar, the King and Queen, the Duchess, and so forth—are incapable of forming the semblance of a real community. When Alice encounters characters individually, incomprehension ensues; when Alice encounters them in groups, such as the tea party or the trial, the characters' eccentric solipsism devolves into anxious sadism. Every utopian philosopher, from Diogenes to Abbie Hoffman, has identified stubborn egotism as humanity's original sin. From egotism spring not only miscommunication and alienation but the self-righteousness of imperialism, whether that of Victorian England or 1960s America. But with personal growth, the ego can be tempered. As Alice grows disenchanted with authority, the pseudo-authoritarian characters of Wonderland properly shrink into literary conceits. Alice is thus poised to become *reen-chanted* with reality and a future that—at least in our imaginations—can transcend the precious sentiments of Victorian childhood.

Our analysis has focused mainly on *Chicago 70*'s thematic and symbolic content. We can now connect that analysis to the film's 'dialectical' form, if we see the trial reenactments as a kind of thesis, the *Alice* interpolations as an antithesis, and Alice's transformation into Linda Morse as a final synthesis. The stylized, theatrical means through which Alice finally transforms remind us that *Chicago 70* was itself adapted from a single-set stage play. While the film often crosscuts between the commentary of the *Alice* characters and the trial proceedings, Alice's transformation into Linda Morse is not rendered through montage or specifically cinematic techniques. Actress Diane Grant simply 'reappears' as Morse, bearing new mannerisms and speaking with a matured voice, as she would in a stage production. Director Feltham, retaining the minimalist procedures of the theater, thus distinguishes *Chicago 70* not only from literalistic *Alice* adaptations but from *Alice*-inspired films steeped in the cinematic avant-garde. Some might see in *Chicago 70* similarities to Godard's *Weekend* (1967), whose characters, following 'the path of Lewis Carroll' (as an intertitle reads), become lost in an anarchic system of allusions and encounter literary personages thrust into Godard's didactic-Brechtian scenario.⁴ Yet

⁴ *Chicago 70*, in turn, perhaps influenced Godard's *Vladimir and Rosa* (1971), which restages the Chicago 7 trial with symbolic political personages (Heinrich Himmler replaces Judge Hoffman, for example).

Chicago 70 is not a patchwork of allusions (like *Weekend*), nor does it indulge the eclecticism of a *bricolage*. Rather than merely borrowing elements from an appropriated text, *Chicago 70*'s time-slipping scenario allows the character of Alice to *incubate within* and then seize control of a larger diegesis (the trial proceedings). When 'Alice' becomes reembodied as the historically conscious activist Linda Morse, the film proposes Alice as an incipiently trans-historical, trans-subjective being. Alice thus escapes what we had called the eternal 'present-tense' of Wonderland, actualizing the growth to which Carroll only symbolically alludes.

By *embedding* Carroll's text rather than conventionally adapting it, *Chicago 70* opens up a realm with dialectical potentials unavailable in adaptations that merely transpose characters to analogous universes. In the film, Carrollian elements not only exist side-by-side with the trial reenactments but eventually encroach upon those reenactments, creating a novel dialectic not through montage but through the collision of two analogous sets of characters operating *within* a dualistic diegetic space. This dialectical potential obviously is absent from standard film adaptations, in which transposed characters arrive more or less intact. While revisionist adaptations often present literary characters in historically, culturally, or even ideologically transformed spaces, such characters typically inhabit parallel worlds rather than trans-subjective ones. Consider nearly any adaptation of *Hamlet*: no matter how he is modernized, recontextualized, or renationalized, Hamlet remains Hamlet, suffering the same existential turmoil and tragic end. Though directors might frame Hamlet's tragedy through differently emphatic lenses, he remains essentially static, never having the (admittedly unusual) opportunity to gestate into a new subject. This characterological stasis tends to hold true even in the farthest-flung adaptations, such as the aforementioned *Joe Macbeth*.⁵ Though it replaces the Bard's blank verse with illiterate 1950s gangster lingo, the film preserves Macbeth's motivations, psychology, and overall dramaturgical trajectory. Despite the film's modern trappings, Macbeth's hubris remains, much as viewers expect it to. So deeply ingrained are our expectations of stasis (or 'faithfulness' to the source) that we require a radical

⁵While certain adaptations deliberately betray their sources, these are exceptions that prove the rule. The original ending to Prokofiev's ballet *Romeo and Juliet* (1936) saw the young lovers live happily ever after. When the Bolshoi Ballet balked, Prokofiev supplied the ending we know today; the original version premiered only in 2008.

gesture—such as the embedded, synthetical subjectivity of *Chicago 70*—to break the mold.

An undeniably bizarre experiment, *Chicago 70* obviously cannot serve as a model for mainstream filmmakers to emulate—its value lies in its eccentricity. By appreciating *Chicago 70*'s innovative dialectical procedures, however, we can more clearly see how even revisionist adaptations fall into conventions of stasis and redundancy, merely transplanting finite, untransformed characters into uncanny frameworks. Though filmmakers are unlikely to borrow (or adapt) the 'incubatory' notions of *Chicago 70*, the film prompts us to imagine how other adaptative scenographies, with other spatiotemporally innovative frameworks, might allow familiar heroes to become (re)subjectivized in ways unimagined by a source work's author. Such newly imagined subjectivities (and their ramifications) lie beyond this single chapter, but we can conclude by emphasizing the ultimate import of Alice's metamorphosis. Reembodied as Linda Morse, the modernized Alice speaks not only politically but *critically*. As the evolving Alice critiques both the trial proceedings and American political society at large, the film unusually (perhaps controversially) comes to privilege Alice as a critical voice over Alice as a literary character. Turning a literary text into a critical voice is no small matter. Arguing for the special import of the critic, Northrop Frye says, 'Criticism can talk, and all the arts are dumb' (1957, 4). Frye does not mean to be cryptic: he simply means that artworks, including *Alice in Wonderland*, are preserved in the amber of history. Their utterances belong to an objectivized past, and artists cannot add to what they have expressed within discrete, finite works. The work of criticism, contrarily, is always unfinished. Belonging to the active moment, criticism proposes a future while acting in the present. While filmmakers may reframe and refashion their adaptations in countless ways, conventional adaptations will likely remain 'dumb' insofar as their characters remain trapped within borrowed, unreconstructed trajectories. *Chicago 70*, by contrast, allows an appropriated character to grow within a film and beyond it, emancipating her from literary stasis and emboldening her to confront the sane madness of history.

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Alice's Adventures in Wondercity: 'Who am I?' Revelation of the Self and Class Consciousness in Woody Allen's *Alice*

Carla Fusco

Alice's Adventures in Wonderland, Lewis Carroll's 1865 masterpiece, is universally acknowledged as a classic of world literature and not simply as a text confined to the stereotyped clichés of children's books. An artistic product has the power to become a classic when its signification continues to multiply, taking on different nuances according to the ages, and continuing to dialogue with the contemporaneity. This is the reason why Carroll's Alice has been the source of inspiration for many adaptations in the most varied artistic fields. The analogical model seems to dominate most adaptations, although the discrepancy between Carroll's words and their images, signified and signifiers, increases the complexity of the whole process of adaptation. Puns and nursery rhymes in the Alice books are typical examples of such a complexity. As Kamilla Elliott notes, indeed, 'Carroll plays on the distinction between "sense" as semantic meaning and "sense" as sensory perception, placing them in conflict with each other' (2003, 187). An adaptation generally implies an inevitable reduction of

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the text as well since ‘it reduces the words of the novel to dialogue; it flattens, shrinks, and cans three-dimensional, life-size, live theatrical performance to two-dimensional, screen size, precoded drama; and it relegates cinematography, videography, and sound to mere recording devices for performance’ (Elliott 2003, 189). The question of reduction becomes particularly problematic when a film adaptation takes advantage of the opportunity to completely reinvent a book.

This is the case of Woody Allen, who is one of the many artists who has been fascinated by the spell of Carroll’s stories to the point of paying her a tribute with his film intentionally entitled *Alice*. Released in 1990, the film can be defined as a supernatural or fantastic comedy based on special effects. That could sound unusual for Allen, but the director had already ventured into the fantasy genre several times before *Alice*, notably with *Sleeper* (1973), *Zelig* (1984), *The Purple Rose of Cairo* (1985). In *Alice* Allen collaborated with director of photography Carlo Di Palma—who has established a steady partnership with the New York film director for more than thirty years—and with Randall Balsmayer and Bob Harman, both experts of special effects, in order to visually depict invisibility, ghost appearances, and even some flying scenes (Bob Harman had been the flying specialist of the *Superman* film series [1978–1987]). Special effects are generally an integral part of the development of the plot, the cases of monsters, aliens, and battles with laser beams being perhaps the most classic examples of their use, especially in the science fiction, epic, and fantasy genres, where they are intended to impress the spectator by means of their interaction with the actors and actresses. The special effects in Allen’s 1990 film instead change the reception of the narration from an anthropological point of view, in the sense that they become generators of new questions for both the protagonist and the viewer, questions about imagination and the need to find tangible answers to unexpected amazement. In this respect, Allen’s intent is faithful to the original story, in which fantasy becomes a metaphor for unconscious desire and an essential tool of personal growth (see Rackin 1974).

Alice combines a romantic plot with social satire, as it frequently occurs in Allen’s cinematographic production. The romantic side in the film is developed around the concepts of innocence and recklessness, which are the main peculiarities of the heroine in the original novel as well. Childhood as a brief, innocent stage of life, a positive period during which a child can enjoy all the aspects of natural freedom before being concerned with the importance of education and social conventions was first theorized and

idealized by Romantic writers and philosophers. As Rousseau affirmed, 'plants are fashioned by cultivation, man by education' (1921, 6). Similarly, John Locke argued that children are like 'a *white paper* with nothing written on' (1690, 18) and only experience can make them adults. One of Alice's main concerns throughout her dreamlike journey in Carroll's Wonderland is the question of 'Who in the world am I?' (1984, 25), her identity being often questioned during the encounters with the local inhabitants. Unlike the original, Allen's heroine is a wealthy adult woman who lives in today's New York, but she is also very childish, still in search of her place in the adult world where she does not feel at ease.

This chapter examines how Allen's film reinvents the original story and how it represents the protagonist's pursuit of a new self. Although Allen's work cannot be considered as a faithful adaptation of the Victorian text, the two Alices share some similarities. The 1990 film can be classified as the third kind of adaptation theorized by André Bazin. According to the latter, there are indeed three types of cinematic adaptations depending on their degree of fidelity to the source text. The faithful intersemiotic translation from literary fiction to film emphasizes the similarities and differences between the literary and the cinematographic narratives within the mimetic mode. A second kind of film adaptation aims at being considered alongside the original text without replacing it but referring to it as the first source of inspiration. The third categorization, instead, consists in the construction of a novel product through cinema, a second-degree work, not a film comparable to the novel or worthy of it, but a new aesthetic entity whose dialectic of fidelity and innovation is ultimately a combination between cinema and literature. The latter is the approach adopted by Allen in his *Alice*, which is truer to the spirit of the book than closer to its contents and plot. Allen's goal is to reproduce, borrowing a concept by Dudley Andrew, 'the feeling of the original' while moving the story to a contemporary context in a 'process of *transfert*' (qtd. in Vanoye 2011, 149), therefore coping not only with the contents of the source text, but also, and above all, with the socio-cultural change concerning its adaptation.

The film's protagonist is Alice Tate (Mia Farrow), a very elegant New York woman, who spends her days on Madison Avenue, among hairdressers, masseurs, and the ateliers of Krizia, Valentino, and Ralph Laurent. Alice seems to lack nothing: she has two beautiful children, all the money she wants, a huge apartment in the heart of Manhattan, a hectic social life, and a lot of free time. Yet, she is unsatisfied and bored and when, out of

the blue, she meets Joe (Joe Mantegna) in front of her children's school, she falls in love with him. Alice has never thought of betraying her husband (William Hurt), one of those Americans who can perfectly simulate moral rigidity, the perfect epitome of the 'wasp,' but, then, thanks to the magic potions that a Chinese doctor prepares for her, she becomes brave and begins her intimate journey to discover her true self.¹ Alice embodies what society expects for 'the other half of the sky' to be. In Carroll's book this is epitomized by a well-educated little girl, while in Allen's film it is an Upper-East side housewife. However, in both cases, the two characters explore a new female subjectivity different from the ideal role imposed by the society in which they have been raised.

An initial feeling of frustration gives way to a personal quest leading the two Alices to the acquisition of a new awareness and, consequently, to the affirmation of the self. During her journey through Wonderland, Alice defends herself strenuously against the paradoxical chaos that could submerge her, continually claiming the logical consequentiality inculcated by her age and those rules and conventions deliberately learned or involuntarily absorbed on the surface world. Yet, she is only an alleged incarnation of the orderly Victorian universe as, from the very first passage of the book in the prologue in verses, she demands the creation of a nonsensical story during the rowboat trip. The little protagonist actually becomes the ambiguous promoter of a subversive narration, the meaning of which is never inside the prepositions, but outside of them, in a marginal threshold of literature (see Deleuze 1984). As a girl, Alice is a bearer of liminality. However, she seems to perfectly know how to behave and also how the other characters, especially the animals, have to behave toward her: she knows the rules of society and tries to obey them despite being in a upside-down world. Wonderland is the place of Alice's initiation and, therefore, of her growth: the young protagonist is at the same time a child crying in the hall of many doors, but also the little Victorian adult who rebukes herself. The journey starts with the fall down the dark, deep, and narrow space of the rabbit hole, and then becomes a journey to maturity. The

¹ The seduction of fantasy, as opposed to the dissatisfaction of real life, is a theme that had already appeared in Allen's production. Alice indeed recalls Cecilia, the protagonist of *The Purple Rose of Cairo* (1985), the dreamy waitress who, lost in her daily routine, crosses 'through the looking-glass' to the fantastic life of the silver screen in order to escape the real. The use of fantasy has another hilarious precedent in the film *Everything You Always Wanted to Know About Sex (But Were Afraid to Ask)* (1972) and it is later present in films such as *Everyone Says I Love You* (1996), *Deconstructing Harry* (1997), and *Midnight in Paris* (2011).

counterworld of Wonderland is the precise reverse of the order and rigidity of the protagonist's era and, specifically, of the Victorian frame of mind, which was characterized by utilitarian and materialistic values. Alice reacts against it by making a large use of free wordplay. When she is awake, she criticizes indeed the pedantic education of her age: she falls asleep just while she is boringly peeking her sister's book 'without picture and conversation' (Carroll 1984, 11). In the senseless underground environment of Wonderland, she then frequently wonders about certain aspects of Victorian childhood education, including her study of Latin, her poor knowledge of geography, or the moral nursery rhymes that she has to memorize (and that Carroll takes delight in changing into some irreverent versions).

As a matter of fact, the only freedom Alice experiences is the freedom to play with words: she reinvents songs, riddles, nursery rhymes, and makes many puns. A pun is always used to give an ambiguous effect to the text, as an 'excrescence of literature' (Culler 1988, 6), and also as 'an embarrassment to be marginalized by relegation to the realm of the infantile, the jocular, the literal' (Attridge 1988, 143). Alice's puns become therefore doubly 'embarrassing,' for their implied satiric attack toward Victorian oppressive regulations and for subverting the literary canon of a novel. Exemplary in that respect is the episode of the Mock Turtle in which Carroll satirizes the Victorian educational system: "What was that?" inquired Alice. "Reeling and Writhing, of course, to begin with" the Mock Turtle replied; "and then the different branches of Arithmetic—Ambition, Distraction, Uglification, and Derision" (1984, 114–15). The meaning of punning can be found 'betwixt and between,' structured in binary oppositions, referring to the marginality in which the universe of femininity is relegated. Driven to sail against the current, Carroll's row-boat becomes a destabilizing means of transport, a vehicle that shapes the structure of Wonderland, a world that plays with words at the expense of meaning overturning the binary structures on which culture is founded. Yet Alice's physical and emotional growth implies the desire to affirm her real self. Though the auto-determination process is not without obstacles (she finds it difficult to reply to the Caterpillar insistently asking her 'Who are you?' for example [Carroll 1984, 24]), as Alice increases her confidence exploring Wonderland she also becomes able to assert herself when she interacts with the local inhabitants. This occurs during her long argument with the Lory, which concludes with the latter's remark "I'm older than you, and must know better." And this Alice would not allow, without

knowing how old it was, and as the Lory positively refused to tell its age, there was no more to be said' (Carroll 1984, 31). During her journey Alice becomes capable of making harsh comments and defiantly replies to the Frog-Footman ('there is no use to talk to him [...] he's perfectly idiotic!' [69]), the Mad Hatter ('It's the stupidest tea-party I ever was at in all my life!' [91]), the Duchess ('I've a right to think' [108]), and even to the royal court ('Why, they're only a pack of cards, after all. I needn't be afraid of them!' [95]). Alice's attitude is something atypical and unexpected for the Victorian age: these quotations are only a few examples of the way she learns to deal with new situations and how resourceful and brave she is to be identified as a precursor of the New Woman, one of the most composite and interesting social and literary phenomena of the 1880s and 1890s.

The definition of 'New Woman' has been officially dated back to March 1894, when it first appeared in the celebrated article by Sarah Grand (1894, 170) that summarizes the arduous evolution in the perception of women's roles, rights, and aspirations against the questioning of their social position. The phrase 'New Woman' became the key topic for a series of controversies that, within a broader debate on political and legal reform issues, shifted the attention of intellectuals toward the formulation of a new morality, a new behavioral code, and new sexual ethics. It was a phenomenon that played a central role in the cultural landscape of the late Victorian age, part of the concatenation of the period's cultural innovations, contemporary with new imperialism, new socialism, and the new proletariat. The figure of the New Woman itself can be interpreted as a prototype of the feminist and her representation in both historical and literary media has been the focus of attention of several scholars (including Anne Louise Ardis, Ann Heilmann, and Sally Ledger) since the 1970s. According to Ledger,

the New Woman was constructed as a threat to women's role as the mothers of the British Empire, then she was also, more generally, regarded as a threat to the economic supremacy of bourgeois men in Britain, and this was certainly another factor which contributed to the spite with which she was condemned. [...] If the association between the New Woman and socialism was often overstated, her threat to the economic *status quo* was quite real. Women had worked outside the home throughout much of the nineteenth century—the idea of the domestic angel was from the start to some extent a Victorian myth—but their employment had largely been in low-paid factory work, sweated labour or domestic service. (1997, 19)

Furthermore, as Elizabeth Macleod Walls argues, 'the New Woman novels, enlivening reform rhetoric even while operating within the boundaries of conformist culture, created a new mode of activism for Victorian women that enabled them to proffer critique about marriage and society, although (and often sadly) from within the home: a tactic I term "domestic feminism"' (2002, 229). The binary opposition between the angel in the house and the New Woman shows the former as privileged over the latter, thus exemplifying Elizabeth Grosz's affirmation that 'Dichotomous thinking necessarily hierarchizes and ranks the two polarized terms so that one becomes the privileged term and the other its suppressed, subordinated, negative counterpart' (1994, 3).

Both Carroll's and Allen's stories ironically question the hierarchized binary as positive/negative, right/wrong by bringing the devalued concept/second term back to challenge the predominant position. In the 1865 novel the predominant first term of the equation is embodied by characters like the White Rabbit or the Caterpillar. The former is elusive and full of haste, continually overloaded with commitments, the symbol of stressed adulthood, filling children with stress in return, overwhelming them with tasks and expectations. The Caterpillar, on the other hand, symbolizes the rationality of adults, their so-called wisdom or experience, but he is never easygoing with Alice or helpful toward her. On the contrary, the child protagonist has to struggle on her own during her journey in Wonderland. The place becomes a metaphor for her transformation and maturation. In Allen's film as well Alice starts her 'journey' after being moved by a feeling of alienation toward her current life. She is a posh housewife leading a privileged existence, but everything around her seems senseless until she meets Joe. The moment they meet turns out to be fatal for the woman: she is 'persuaded to give up the role she had played so far, having so perfectly internalized rules of behavior in opposition to her intimate aspiration' (Schmitt-Pitiot 2015, 100).² Nevertheless, the encounter with Joe is not to be banally meant as the solution to the protagonist's personal crisis, but only as the beginning of an intense period of transformation and personal growth.

The film chronotope is developed in three standard space-time levels pieced together: the time and space of the narrator, those of the story itself, and the time and space in which the spectator sees and reviews the

² 'Amenée à renoncer au rôle qu'elle jouait si parfaitement jusque-là au prix d'une intériorisation de règles de comportement à l'opposé de ses aspirations intimes.' My translation.

story. The narration is structured within a combination of the extradiegetic mode (as there is a voiceover speaker) and the mimetic mode (as the narrator also speaks through his characters). Many flashbacks are present in the film, but the retrospective is not linear; it is carried out 'by cutting' the course of the related events according to the point of view of the narrator who is a sort of character in the story. The film nevertheless easily maintains a coherent text in spite of the breaks due to the overlapping of narrative sequences, thanks also to the use of expressive and meaningful means such as color and music for each story line. The love scenes between Alice and her first boyfriend, for instance, develop in an atmosphere of cold color tones and dreamy, sentimental music, which together evoke the loneliness, regrets, and nostalgic memories of the two lovers. On the contrary, the scenes that take place in the pleasant, sometimes playful atmosphere of high New York society are invaded by a warm light, and the background music is always more lively, basically Dixie jazz.

Similarly to some of his previous films, such as *Annie Hall* (1977), in *Alice* Allen makes use of the image of a roller coaster as a metaphor for life with its ups and downs. As Joseph Mills suggests, 'the roller coaster represents the perfect Aristotelian device. It has a beginning, middle, and end, rising and falling action, twist and reversals. It is constructed like a conventional narrative' (2001, 40). This reiterated image in Allen's films also symbolizes a sort of wheel of fortune which affects the life of an individual in a particular state of vulnerability. In the case of Alice, a roller coaster is pictured in the background in one of the flashbacks, specifically when Alice 'selects her ride,' namely, when she accepts Doug's marriage proposal. Such a decision, the present tense of the narrative confirms, has led the female protagonist to assume a passive role that has now become too narrow for her. She summarizes her current life to Dr Yang (Keye Luke) after he hypnotizes her with the aid of a wheel spin: 'I'm the wife, you know. I take care of the kids, I host the dinner parties, arrange the social schedule, try to look pretty so [my husband's] friends can admire [his] taste. I've become one of those women who shops all day and gets pedicures. But I wanna be more. There's more to me.'

However, fate is not inevitable and can be changed, from the down position of the roller coaster Alice can regain the upper position and be at the helm of her life. She is therefore ready, like the literary Alice, to explore a new dimension, which is actually not Wonderland, but Wondercity. The latter is New York, the metropolis repeatedly and romantically celebrated by Allen as the main source of his artistic inspiration. New York is not

simply a city for the director, but the soul place where he frees his imagination, a place of memory and nostalgia. Allen admits that his view on the metropolis is indeed rather unusual: 'I show the New York that exists in Hollywood movies from the 1930s and 1940s that I grew up on, a New York that never really existed, because that is the New York I fell in love with' (qtd. in Lax 2000, 218). His fascination for the metropolis also relies on 'a freedom of movement, individualism, the frontier spirit, and a love of newness,' as William Tabb argues (1982, 3). 'The Big Apple' sets the iconic background of elegance and style while, quoting *Manhattan*, it also becomes 'a metaphor for the decay of contemporary culture' (Allen 1979). Yet Alice's Wondercity is a turning point in Allen's representation of New York. In this film the depiction of the metropolis follows the dynamics of a binary opposition: on the one hand there is the habitual luxury life of the Upper East Side and, on the other hand, the exotic suburbs populated by immigrants. The latter is the place where Alice begins her journey of self-discovery which eventually leads her to abandon her high-end but shallow life for a new one. Like Carroll's Alice, she needs to experience a new environment, her own 'underworld' in order to begin a transformation. Such an underworld is actually seen without the veil of social hypocrisy and prejudice, a new perspective that is made possible once Alice drinks a magic potion and when she experiences invisibility.

In Carroll's book the theme of eating and drinking is crucial since the moment Alice is attracted by the label of a little bottle bearing the sign 'drink me' as well as by a small cake with the words 'eat me' (Carroll 1984, 17 and 19), which both provoke significant changes in her size. According to Christiane Bimberg these passages serve as a metaphor to describe her transformation from a child into an adolescent: '[C]hanging in size indicates Alice's social and cultural explorations and, moreover, a critical child personality in search for its own identity. The reversed logic, the food absurdities, the punning, the nonsense poetry and songs relating to eating are part of the subversion strategy [...] against the rigidity of Victorian society' (1999, 30–31). Although she is a little girl, Alice becomes a transgressive figure, the emblem of social hierarchical rebellion. Her critical comment against the boring Victorian school books is the starting point of her rebellion, when she falls asleep and unchains her imagination. Food and drinks further become the keys to unlock the new fantastic world but, as Michael Parrish Lee indicates, 'Food is not simply an object utilized by social subjects. [...] Wonderland foods are cocreators of human character' (2014, 490)—which is also hinted at by the young girl when she wonders

‘Maybe it’s always pepper that makes people hot-tempered [...] and vinegar that makes them sour—and camomile that makes them bitter—and—and barley-sugar and such things that make children sweet-tempered’ (Carroll 1984, 105) (for a discussion of food and eating in *Alice in Wonderland* and some of its adaptations see Chap. 2 of the present collection).

Similarly to her eponymous, Alice Tate tries some magic concoctions after her frustration comes to affect her body by provoking severe pains to her back and she leaves her comfort zone to meet the outside world by visiting Dr Yang in Chinatown. Yang is a mysterious Chinese druggist who persuades her to begin a voyage of self-discovery. It is no coincidence that, in such a scene, Allen chooses to mention food in the form of the magical herbs the doctor offers to the protagonist: as Nathan Abrams affirms, indeed, ‘[T]he importance of food to Allen’s oeuvre was indicated early on his film career’ (2013, 215).³ Dr Yang’s mixture of herbs affects people’s behavior—as it is evident when, later on, they are erroneously taken by the guests during a home party (the scene is particularly hilarious because the herbs have the power to make people fall instantly in love with Alice and she consequently receives declarations of love from all the men at the party). Another occasion occurs when, thanks to the same herbal mixture, she becomes invisible and is finally able to confront the truth of the world surrounding her. On such an occasion the film’s protagonist understands that she has sacrificed her personal ambition in favor of her family life.

The access to the voyage of self-discovery and self-assertion begins with the many stairs that the protagonist takes to get to Dr Yang’s: Alice Tate ascends while Carroll’s Alice descends, but they both enter into a new environment. The doctor’s office-flat is the most distant setting from the woman’s standards, it being a grubby hole with faint lights and some Chinese strangers lying on the floor and smoking opium, but he gives her a warm welcome, suggests her to relax, and recommends the assumption of some herbs. These, along with the doctor’s ability to hypnotize his subjects, allows Alice to experience a series of incredible adventures, some

³ Abrams further argues: ‘in the post-Mia Farrow period, we find an encapsulation of Allen’s (and much of his Jewish humor’s) comedic formula’ (2013, 215). Food has prominence in Allen’s *Deconstructing Harry* (1997) as well, in which the director ‘quotes the (Christian) heaven and God with Chinese food, Allen deflates lofty ideas and conflates them with the quotidian, blurring and demystifying the line between the profane and the divine’ (Abrams 2013, 215–16).

of whom within her mind's looking-glass (including the apparition of her former lover's ghost and the flying sequence). The smoky and moist atmosphere of Dr Yang's place also recalls Alice's encounter with the Caterpillar, the most introspective among the characters of Carroll's novel. Similar to the doctor in Allen's film, the Caterpillar forces Alice to look inside herself and find an answer to his persisting question 'Who are you?' (Carroll 1984, 53). Alice Tate's misleading answer (quoted above) shows that she is in the midst of an existential crisis, as is the case with the nineteenth-century character: "I can't explain myself, I'm afraid, sir," said Alice, "because I'm not myself, you see" (Carroll 1984, 54). The spiral shape of the Caterpillar's hookah and the smoke rings he exhales while addressing the young girl are reinvented by Allen using a hypnotic-disc that the doctor operates in order for Alice to fall into a trance. It is thanks to this trick that Alice starts a regression which helps her to better understand herself and her life. As it occurs in Carroll's tale, after being stimulated by the short, pressing questions of her interlocutor, Allen's Alice questions her own identity in this moment of self-analysis, explicitly expressing (and thus admitting to herself for the first time) her feelings for her husband and her frustration at not being 'someone else.'

The use of hypnosis in motion pictures has a long tradition that can be dated back to Maurice Tourneur's *Trilby* (1915) and Robert Wiene's *The Cabinet of Dr Caligari* (1920), both of which have become most influential landmarks of later films. Hypnosis has also efficaciously worked as a subplot in many horror and science fiction films as much as in comedies. Nevertheless, it has generally been considered as a negative practice: '[F]or nearly a century, celluloid mesmerists have swung watches, twirled spiral disks, and transfixed the unsuspecting with their piercing gaze. Maidens surrendered their virtue and good men staggered away, glassy-eyed, to steal and kill' (Barrett 2006, 11). Many films represent hypnosis as the ability to control others and exemplify both a popular fear and an attractive ambition.⁴ Unconventionally, however, in *Alice* hypnosis is rehabilitated because it helps the protagonist to regain control over herself. She overcomes shyness to become confidently sexy when, encountering Joe for the second time, she tells him: 'Your eyes are really on fire,' 'I've done things I didn't know I had in me,' and 'There's nothing sexier than a

⁴ Allen employs this stereotype in his *The Curse of the Jade Scorpion* (2001), for example, where a turbaned stage hypnotist makes use of his ability to commit some resounding jewelry thefts.

lapsed Catholic.’ Such provoking words are uttered when she is under the effects of the herbs Dr Yang gave her, which lead her to lose any inhibition.

Like the ‘psychedelic’ mushroom offered by the Caterpillar to Alice, which allows her to grow taller or shorter at will, Dr Yang’s potion also allows a physical transformation as it makes Alice invisible. In this sequence invisibility allows Alice to see things as they really are: she realizes that hers is a hypocritical world made up of social rituals without depth, an unfaithful husband and false friendships are the substantial outline of her existence, and her lover Joe is still in love with his former wife. Such a realization is expressed in the dialogue uttered during Alice’s second visit to the doctor:

Alice Tate: I’ve experienced a double blow. A husband who loved me once, I know that he no longer does. And a man I met recently and developed strong feelings for now doesn’t seem to want me.

Dr. Yang: Love. Love is most complex emotion. Human beings unpredictable. No logic to emotions. Where there is no logic, there is no rational thought. Where there is no rational thought, there can be much romance but much suffering.

Alice Tate: Gee, I ... I feel like I’m adrift, like I’ve been cut loose. A while ago I had a routine life, with feelings I understood. A husband, a home.

Dr. Yang: Mrs. Tate had illusion of happiness. Upon closer observation, not very honest husband, not very honest with self.

Alice Tate: I’m frightened.

Dr. Yang: Freedom is frightening feeling.

In the meanwhile Alice has also met the ghost of her former boyfriend and now retraces the salient stages of her life in order to understand her past mistakes, as Dr Yang states: ‘In times of great stress sometimes ghost appears.’ Romance and humor intertwine triggering numerous hilarious scenes when Alice decides to share the potion with Joe, offering him the opportunity to become invisible and clear his mind about his life (he realizes that he is still in love with his former wife and wants her back in his life). Alice’s fantastic experiences function as sessions of psychoanalysis in which her mind retrieves many thoughts and expectations from her past and helps her to recall who she was (a young woman struggling to break

into the fashion industry) and how she can reconstruct her real self in the present.

Wandering in the Wondercity of New York, Alice finally experiences her moment of acknowledgment, her epiphany, when a documentary on Mother Teresa's missionaries of charity reveals her the new path to follow:

Sometimes I think I'm not raising my children with the right values. That I'm spoiling them. Not exposing them to the things that matter most. When I was young, I wanted to be a saint. I used to pray with my arms outstretched because it was more painful and I could feel closer to God. I wanted to spend my life helping people, taking care of the sick and the old people. I was never happier than when I got a chance to help out that way. What happened? Where did that part of me go?

The new Alice is no longer the sophisticated woman who attends high society parties, but a woman engaged in voluntary work: the upper-middle-class lady is transformed into an unconventional heroine. Alice's new awareness destabilizes her unfaithful husband, who does not believe in his wife's change, as his words confirm in the epilogue: 'One minute without your charge plates and masseuse and you would be lost!' Her emancipation therefore takes place through the stripping of her social position's trappings, and through the affirmation of a more authentic and, above all, a more autonomous role. Alice frees herself from the confining position of a mere wife to become an all-round New Woman. From the latter's original vision she indeed inherits a sense of feminist consciousness, the desire for independence, and a love for her neighbor. The film's last scene portrays a happily divorced Alice in her new routine while radiantly pushing the swing of her children. She wears unsigned clothes and lives in a small (and definitely more modest) house, but she is finally at the helm of her life. Carroll's and Allen's heroines are not powerless characters doomed to a life of domestic dullness, but two protagonists capable of taking an alternative route. This occurs to the Victorian heroine when she eventually manages to stand up to the Queen of Hearts' outbursts of anger before waking up from her dream. And it occurs to the New York lady when she finally finds her way in the world. Both Carroll and Allen narrate the stories of two little, great women embarking on their adventures and, through their experiences, becoming self-empowered enough to change their relation with the world surrounding them.

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PART III

Alice's Adventures in Other Media



(In)Appropriating Alice: The Neo-Victorian Sexualization of Carroll's Wonderland

Anne-Marie Beller and Claire O'Callaghan

*Echoes fade and memories die:
Autumn frosts have slain July
Still she haunts me, phantomwise,
Alice moving under skies
Never seen by waking eyes.
Children yet, the tale to hear,
Eager eye and willing ear,
Lovingly shall nestle near.
—Carroll (2007, 327)*

Since the publication of A.M.E. Goldschmidt's essay, 'Alice in Wonderland Psycho-Analysed' in 1933, there have been, as Will Brooker discusses, two dominant schools of thought toward Lewis Carroll and *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* (1865). In the first school, suggests Brooker, 'Carroll is a

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sainted innocent, his books are joyous nonsense and Alice is his muse. In the other, Carroll is a paedophile, his books are dark allegories, and Alice is his obsession' (2005, xv). The thinking behind the latter has been amplified by recent research speculating that Carroll had an unhealthy interest in young girls, a notion based on his close relationship with Alice Liddell, the real-life inspiration for Alice.¹

It is not our intention to prove or disprove the rumors of Dodgson's alleged pedophilia that continue to haunt his legacy; rather, our interest is the wide-ranging ways in which neo-Victorian authors and artists have responded to this claim, the author and his work in highly sexual terms, amounting to what Inmaculada Pineda Hernández and Maria Isabel Romero Ruiz have described as 'neo-Victorian sexploitation' (2014, 6–7). For clarity, neo-Victorianism is defined as 'texts (literary, filmic, audio/visual)' which are 'in some way [...] self-consciously engaged with the act of *(re)interpretation*, *(re)discovery* and *(re)vision* concerning the Victorians' (Heilmann and Llewellyn 2010, 4). Aptly, as this collection indicates, contemporary reimaginings of the *Alice* books cover a dazzling spectrum of genres and media, and, as Cathlena Martin has suggested, the 'reinterpretation of Alice shows the versatility and mutability of the story across time and discourse' (2010, 136–37).

However, biofiction and audio-visual texts devoted to Dodgson and Liddell's lives are complicated both by the ethics of appropriation and the challenge of *how* to re-tell the tale of a real-life figure dogged posthumously by allegations of pedophilia in the absence of actual evidence to affirm the matter (this is also discussed in Chap. 4 of the present collection). As such, we argue that these works frequently demonstrate what Hernández and Ruiz describe as a 'working-through' of 'sex-related traumas and iniquities, both past and present' (2014, 6). Sometimes the inappropriate ideas are articulated and explored by a fictionalized Dodgson,

¹When Dodgson first met Alice Liddell in 1856 she was four years old. Their friendship spanned the period 1856 to 1863, when the Liddell family mysteriously broke off relations with Dodgson. On the 'Golden Afternoon' of the boat trip, the point of origin for *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*, Alice Liddell was ten years old. Dodgson's missing diary entries (which have fueled extensive speculation) cover the period from 18 April 1858 to 8 May 1862. The age of sexual consent at this time was twelve years old. It is worth noting that Dodgson fictionalizes Liddell as a much younger child. Significantly, in the 1860s there was considerable debate about the sexual abuse of children due to the campaigns against the Contagious Diseases Acts. Feminist campaigners working to protect child prostitutes were continually hampered by the fact that the law sanctioned sexual activity in pre-pubescent girls.

but elsewhere they are vocalized by a reimagined Alice as she uncovers past traumas. Further, we identify the notion of ‘haunting’ at a conceptual and textual level as a significant mode through which the complex issue of appropriation (or ‘inappropriation’) is navigated. As Rosario Arias and Patricia Pulham have noted, spectrality is a major trope in neo-Victorian texts, since neo-Victorianism both calls the Victorians to life in the contemporary present and ‘defamiliarizes our preconceptions of Victorian society’ (2009, xv). With respect to Alice’s neo-Victorian afterlives, haunting functions as an explicit theme and/or psychoanalytic motif or, more implicitly, is present at the level of a haunted subtext. In this way, the texts in question here expand Nadine Beohm-Schnikter and Susanne Gruss’s view that the ‘collective’ neo-Victorian imagination ‘keeps appropriating the Victorian age, and keeps turning it into a contemporary phenomenon (or phantom)’ (2014, 24). As we will show, haunting exists across Alice’s transmedia afterlives: visual media reworks the notorious photographs (themselves ghostly) that lie at the heart of pedophilic speculation, and many are haunted by suggestive notions of inappropriate sexual desire, behavior and/or exploitation, sometimes, as we will show, in the face of their own claim to avoid them.

Aptly, as the epigram to this chapter demonstrates, such suggestive spectral tropes began with Carroll himself, for the poem that closes *Through the Looking Glass* constructs Alice as a ghostly phantom, who ‘haunts’ both the author and the texts she inhabits (2007, 327). Consequently, the inappropriate neo-Victorian afterlives of *Alice* and reimaginings of Dodgson’s relationship with her continue this motif, reworking them in new and often disturbing ways. If, as we suggest, neo-Victorian Alice narratives are often the ‘working-through’ of ‘sex-related traumas and iniquities, both past and present,’ then ‘haunting’ functions as a compelling textual, symbolic, and psychoanalytic mechanism through which the complexity of Dodgson and Liddell’s ambiguous relationship is navigated in Alice’s transmedia afterlives (Hernández and Ruiz 2014, 6). In exploring our argument, we begin our chapter first with a discussion of the tension between past and present contexts, before then moving onto the close analysis of sexual exploitation and ambiguity in a selection of Alice’s neo-Victorian afterlives.

Produced in 2015 to mark the one hundred and fiftieth anniversary of *Alice in Wonderland*, the BBC documentary, *The Secret World of Lewis Carroll*, served only to amplify debates surrounding Dodgson’s relationship with Alice. Narrated by Martha Kearney, the documentary explored

both the book history of Dodgson's canonical text and the provocative nature of the author's photographs of the young Liddell, including, among others, the infamous 'Alice Liddell as The Beggar Maid' photograph taken in 1858, where a bare-footed Alice stands dressed in rags, with one hand on her hip and a nipple exposed. While the documentary received criticism from select contributors for breaching the BBC's rules regarding fairness, the broadcast nonetheless reflected on the long-lasting effect of the suggestive images and worked through the complex and often traumatic legacies they seemingly unearthed.² Carroll's own granddaughter, Vanessa Tait—also author of *The Looking-Glass House* (2015), a novel about the Liddell's governess, Mary Prickett, and her relationship with Dodgson—suggested that Dodgson's relationship with the younger girl *could* be described as 'love' (2015, 5.09 mins). Tait's words recall how, for the Victorians, the middle-class, female child represented a complex set of fantasies, centered on purity, innocence, and passivity. As James Kincaid has suggested, innocence is largely figured as a set of negations, 'a beginning state, uninscribed, a blank' and, in this sense, the figure of Alice functions as a void to be filled by adult (usually male) desires (1992, 77–78). However, for the contemporary novelist Will Self, the photos are something else. In his view, Carroll 'was a heavily repressed paedophile, without doubt' (2015, 50.10 mins) and 'the power of [*Alice in Wonderland*] is the very fact of Carroll's attraction to Alice.'³

Despite Self's assertion, as the documentary indicates, it is impossible to confirm the precise nature of Dodgson's relationship with Alice or the intention behind the countless photographs that he took of her and other prepubescent children. Yet, as Kearney concludes, irrespective of its Victorian context, it remains difficult to view the photographs in a contemporary moment anxious from a heightened awareness of pedophilia and the sexual threats facing children. This is a notion amplified further by the international attention bestowed on Operation Yewtree, the police investigation into the wide-ranging allegations of abuse made against the television broadcaster Jimmy Saville. Indeed, such is Saville's legacy that his name is now a shorthand for reading pedophilic behavior of the past.

²For more on this see Patrick Foster, 'BBC failed to tell experts that Lewis Carroll documentary would include "paedophile" claims,' *The Telegraph*, 14 December 2015, <https://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/bbc/12050278/BBC-failed-to-tell-experts-that-Lewis-Carroll-documentary-would-include-paedophile-claims.html>. Accessed on 6 January 2019.

³*The Secret World of Lewis Carroll*, 31 January 2015, BBC, 36.00 and 50.10 mins.

As one contributor puts it in the BBC documentary, it is ‘tempting [...] to think of Carroll as a Victorian Jimmy Saville’ (2015, 42.21 mins).

The rise of sexual violence against minors has been linked by some commentators to the escalation of child pornography. For example, Candice Kim suggests that ‘the existence of images that sexually exploit children represents tangible evidence of past, present and, most likely, future abuse’ (Kim 2005, 1). Carroll’s photographs of Alice may not be recognized today as child pornography *per se*, but their inappropriate nature (by current standards) and the discomfort this produces in a modern-day society highly sensitized to pedophilia, arguably locates the images in a liminal space between historical innocence and current social anxieties. Troublingly, it is not just the BBC’s documentary that continues to vocalize connections between pedophilia and *Alice* for, in 1998, Operation Cathedral, an investigation led by the British National Crime Squad, closed an international child pornography network operating via the internet known as ‘The Wonderland Club,’ named after Carroll’s book, something that is a reminder of the pedophilic allegations levied at Dodgson and which inadvertently reinforces the perceived inappropriateness of Dodgson’s relationship with Liddell.⁴

Whichever position one takes on the subject, the visual images that Dodgson took of Liddell remain at the heart of debates surrounding the author’s sexual predilections. Returning to ‘The Beggar Maid’ image discussed earlier, Robert Douglas-Fairhurst notes that while the piece could be seen as ‘childishly unselfconscious’ or ‘deliberately provocative,’ some viewers would, no doubt, ‘have seen equally ragged child prostitutes on London’s streets,’ and ‘she [Alice] is offering something in return’ (2015, 98). Aptly, the association between Alice and prostitution is one that has been developed by neo-Victorian artists. The Dutch illustrator Alvin Silvraants, for example, has produced a series of pop-art images that sexualize Alice and suggest she *is* a prostitute, thus drawing another dubious connection to Dodgson’s ‘The Beggar Maid.’ In Silvraants’s 2013 piece, ‘Alice in Wonderland hooker,’ a tattooed and smoking Alice dressed in fishnet stockings and suspenders and a Disney-esque dress (based on the design from the 1951 animation feature) is shown leaning into a car (with the number plate ‘tea party’) to negotiate with a prospective client.⁵ Alice’s

⁴The operation made over one hundred arrests across thirteen countries.

⁵‘Alice in Wonderland hooker’ is accessible here: <https://www.pinterest.co.uk/pin/568368415443612561/>.

pose raises her already short skirt to expose her adolescent thighs, thus creating the suggestion of visible access to her body. The image is accompanied by a caption that reads 'Sure Mister, I have all the right skills to take you to Wonderland!' The composition makes explicit the sexualized gaze on Alice's body that is more ambiguous in the original Dodgson photographs. Moreover, Silvrant's image links directly to modern pornographic renderings of Alice, which will be discussed later in this chapter. Nevertheless, 'Alice in Wonderland hooker' relies on the rumors of Dodgson's alleged pedophilia and endorses Catherine Siemann's view that, in the contemporary imagination, Wonderland is often 'now fraught with sexual danger' and is 'clearly no safe place for a young child' (2012, 179). What is more, in images such as Silvrant's, Alice is represented as a compliant young adult rather than the seven-year-old girl of Carroll's books, although the infantilizing Disney-esque costume ensures that the picture is still read in the context of Alice's youthfulness.

Returning to the BBC's controversial documentary, its contentious claims, specifically with respect to Alice, center on one particular question: why did the relationship between Dodgson and the Liddell family come to an abrupt end? To answer that question, the documentary explores both Dodgson's photography and historical evidence to elucidate the view that Mrs Liddell, Alice's mother, was uncomfortable with the photographs being taken of her daughters. This question and its connectivity to Dodgson's provocative photographs also lie at the heart of Katie Roiphe's novel, *Still She Haunts Me* (2001). In the next section of this chapter, we turn our attention to a close reading of Roiphe's novel to examine the way in which she reconstructs—from a neo-Victorian/twenty-first-century standpoint—an account of Dodgson's relationship with Alice.

Roiphe's novel (examined also in Chap. 4) focuses on Dodgson's relationship with Alice, and the creation of Wonderland, during the years 1856 to 1863, the years that 'map directly on to the historical period of Dodgson and Alice's real-life close friendship' (Armitt 2004, 167). The title of the book comes from Carroll's aforementioned poem at the end of *Through the Looking Glass*, in which the beginning letters of each line spell out Alice Pleasance Liddell's full name. The novel's title implies both memory and desire, something that is also said to have been captured in the notorious photographs that Dodgson took of Alice and, as Lucie Armitt notes, 'is a kind of ghost story in which Alice takes on and loses clear definition, shape-shifts in and out of focus, comes to embody the role of phantom, a shadow, allure personified' (2004, 168). Armitt's

observation draws out the elusive nature of *this* Alice, and yet, as the novel's references to photography and the Dodgson/Alice relationship make clear, this dynamic is eroticized. Moreover, although Armitt fails to contextualize Roiphe's novel as neo-Victorian, the novel not only falls within the field's definitional remit but uses haunting and spectrality as *the* major motif to examine the extent to which Dodgson's relationship with Alice was inappropriate.

In the novel, Roiphe initially constructs Dodgson and Alice's relationship within the realm of child's play. Yet she consistently adds an eroticized dynamic to such interactions. In one of the novel's earliest scenes, a playful Alice appears

soaked, her hair plastered to her face, her white dress transparent, clinging. She was smiling, water dripping down her forehead, into her eyes, drops sticking to her lashes. She started running. 'Catch me,' she called, and he ran [,] finally as they reached the gate he caught her, rain in his eyes, pulling her up, soaking and kicking her legs and screaming, 'Put me down, Mr. Dodgson, put me down.' (2001, 25)

Roiphe's emphasis on Alice's 'transparent, clinging' and 'wet' dress is, at once, innocent, and yet the words undoubtedly function suggestively, alerting the reader to the fact that Alice's pre-adolescent body is visible to Dodgson. Further, the reference to Alice's 'lashes' works to feminize and sexualize the young child, making the playful request for Dodgson to 'catch' her flirtatious and Dodgson's response domineering. Nonetheless, the reader is reminded that this is a child, thus rendering Alice's eventual plea to be released ambiguous and uncomfortable. In this way, Roiphe plays with the allegations surrounding Dodgson, foregrounding suggestively the inappropriateness of his behavior.

However, in the event that such a connection has not been made by the reader, Roiphe qualifies the uneasy nature of the moment through the fictional portrayal of Alice's mother who remarks, 'What imagination you have, Mr. Dodgson,' a comment that the narrator notes was made with 'disapproval in her voice' (2001, 25). Mrs Liddell, we are told, 'sees through him' (2001, 25). While the specific meaning of her words is ambiguous, the implication is that she views Dodgson suspiciously, and the reason for her discomfort is that she has interpreted the older man chasing a young girl in a wet, now see-through dress as dubious.

Indeed, through the novel, Mrs Liddell remains critical of Dodgson, and Roiphe juxtaposes her uneasy sentiments with Dodgson's own tormented ruminations regarding his feelings for the young girl. In one scene, for instance, the narrator describes Alice as sitting on Dodgson's lap 'with her arm draped around his neck' as he tells her a story (2001, 51). The story is one about oysters, an image long recognized as synonymous with female genitalia, and Alice is described as 'melt[ing] against his chest, oysterlike herself' (2001, 51). It is after the story, though, that Roiphe's narrator reimagines the intimacy of the moment from Dodgson's perspective:

He anticipated her desires even before she knew what they were [...] What does Alice want? She could feel thinking as he spoke, underneath, and that question, that anticipation was it: her participation. The ideas thrown up from the depths just for her. This was something she understood right from the beginning, the collaboration of the story. These stories were not just for her, they were *from* her. (2001, 52)

Here—and throughout the novel—Roiphe avoids any explicit representation of sexual abuse; the complex nature of Dodgson's feelings for Alice are presented only through his diaries, dreams, and interior monologues. While the scene above incorporates inappropriate suggestion through contemplative means, sometimes Roiphe takes this further, offering more violent symbolism to register improper desire. In one episode, Dodgson dreams of beheading Alice in a sequence that explicitly appropriates wording from his novel as clearly symbolic of a loss of virginity—one, moreover, figured in violent and violating terms:

Off with her head! Off with her head! The crescendoing rhythm, became unbearable. He rushed into the room and in one motion twisted off Alice's head [...] Blood flowed from her neck, soaking the sheets, the quilts, the rug. He held her nightgowned body, cradling it, covered in blood himself. (2001, 147)

The references to Alice's decapitation arguably connote the taking of her 'maidenhead,' while the blood gestures toward the loss of virginity.⁶ The semantic register of 'crescendo,' 'rhythm,' and 'motion' is suggestive of the sexual act. In this way, Roiphe avoids constructing actual scenes of sexual abuse that we cannot ascertain truly happened, but at the same time, through Carroll's own psyche, implies his pedophilic desires.

Critics have noted that Roiphe's novel follows the significant trope in neo-Victorian fiction of the recovery of marginalized or silenced voices from the past. As Kym Brindle suggests,

Such revisionist desires fit hand-in-glove with Carroll's diary, with its advertised silences that subordinate content to lacunae. Silence most often equates with sexual secrets for neo-Victorian writers and Carroll's riddling documents and controversial photographs fuel a particular form of critical interest that is fundamental to the neo-Victorian project. (2014, 119)

Indeed, since its inception, neo-Victorianism has been celebrated for addressing issues of historical silence by way of voicing. As Peter Widdowson puts it, contemporary 'revisionary fiction' emphasizes the 'process of restoring a voice [...] to those hitherto exploited, marginalised and silenced by dominant interests and ideologies' (Widdowson 2006, 505–06). Widdowson's comment implicitly includes the figure of the child within its nomenclature, and yet there continues to be a palpable void in neo-Victorian representations of children.⁷ As such, child voicelessness—so to speak—is inherently embroiled with issues of power and the hierarchical dynamic between adult and child. While this notion lies at the heart of Roiphe's novel and other transmedia texts in focus here, many neo-Victorian reworkings of Alice side-step the matter by making Alice older. Nonetheless, female maturation—or *not* growing up—is central to many of these reworkings. Roiphe, for instance, depicts a Dodgson who

⁶The image here of Alice in blood-drenched clothing evokes other neo-Victorian renderings of Alice, which emphasize the elements of madness, blood, and violence. For instance, American McGee's Alice carries a bloodied weapon (her vorpal blade) and wears a dress soaked in the blood of her enemies. Highlighting the transmediation of McGee's games, it is possible to buy Alice's Vorpal Blade on the shopping website Etsy, along with other tie-in merchandise.

⁷Exceptions to this include the special issue (5, no.1) of *Neo-Victorian Studies* entitled 'The Child in Neo-Victorian Arts and Discourse: Renegotiating 19th Century Concepts of Childhood' from 2012, and Louisa Yates's 2011 chapter 'The Figure of the Child in Neo-Victorian Queer Families.'

plaintively clings to Alice's childhood: for instance, he gives her 'an "un-birthday" present on a different day to encourage her not to get any older' (2001, 33). In his diary, Dodgson regrets that 'grown women drift farther and farther from that ideal form' (2001, 30). Interestingly, a persistent trope of Carroll's *Alice* books is an encoded authorial resistance to Alice's (inevitable) maturation. In most of the contemporary sexualized reimaginings of Alice she has thwarted her author's desire to maintain her pre-adolescent state and has 'grown up.' Of course, part of this is undoubtedly to do with censorship, laws, and taboos around pedophilia, but it might also be read in more positive ways as a narrative subversion or even liberation.

Indeed, elsewhere there is almost a defiant relish in presenting an adult Alice and these grown-up imaginings are often by female writers and artists. From the full-breasted Alice of Raven Gregory's *Return to Wonderland* series to the appropriation of Alice by female pornographers, there is a willful rejection of the Carrollian desire to maintain his character's pre-pubescent state. Far from accepting an arrested state of development, these texts are actively grappling with the legacy of the adult-Carroll vs. child-Alice dynamic. It is worth noting that the Victorian fetishization of children (and particularly the girl-child) is a legacy that is still present in contemporary society. From the controversies over child beauty pageants, and pop stars dressing as schoolgirls, to 'grooming' on the internet, the sexualization of children remains a complex issue with far-reaching social and cultural implications.⁸ In this way, female appropriations which empower Alice through adulthood and agency arguably challenge this inheritance.

By contrast, many of the male contributions to the neo-Victorian Alice genre deliberately 'dodge' the pedophilia issue—for example, American McGee's *Alice* games (examined in Chap. 17), Tim Burton's film adaptations (see Chap. 8), and Jeff Noon's Steampunk-esque parodic fantasy novel, *Automated Alice*. However, as we shall see, some of these appropriations, in their self-conscious marginalization of the pedophilic narrative, are yet haunted by the specter of the Carroll allegations.

⁸For example, the NSPCC held an expert seminar series on 'Premature Sexualisation: Understanding the Risks,' from which it published a report in March 2011. See <https://www.nspcc.org.uk/globalassets/documents/information-service/seminars-premature-sexualisation-understanding-risks.pdf>. Governments in various countries have conducted similar enquiries.

Helen Pilinovsky has argued that the increasingly common ‘nubile Alice’ of recent appropriations is a response to ‘an uneasy fascination with the circumstances surrounding the composition of her original story’; Alice, therefore, must be portrayed as older ‘in order to excuse that interest’ (2009, 176). In pornography, of course, the necessity of presenting an Alice over the age of consent is also imperative for legal reasons. Ethics and legality aside, some of the most interesting resistance to the figure of Alice as abused victim is found in the work of female pornographers and sex workers.

Laura Kipnis has argued that pornography is not only social, but ‘acutely historical’ (1999, 167). By this she means that a society’s pornographic productions embody that culture’s history as well as individual histories. As Kipnis elucidates, ‘Pornography’s favorite terrain is the tender spots where the individual psyche collides with the historical process of molding social subjects’ (1999, 167). In this way, we might draw connections between pornography and ‘sexploitative’ neo-Victorianism, wherein both evoke social histories in ways which speak directly to and of our own time and its collective anxieties and desires.

Laura Helen Marks has examined the widespread appropriation of *Alice* within the hardcore pornography industry and has demonstrated that Carroll’s character is particularly prominent in the categories of fetish and BDSM.⁹ She accounts for this proliferation by pointing to the ‘punitive violence’ of Carroll’s books and the ways in which Alice oscillates between dominant and submissive behaviors (Marks 2018, 106). Interestingly, Marks’s study shows that the world of *Alice* fetish pornography is a space largely controlled by women: ‘Alice has become the dominatrix icon of this world, its mistress and author, with Carroll entirely removed from the equation’ (2018, 106).

Of particular interest in Marks’s chapter is her interview with ‘Mistress Alice,’ whose BDSM website, *Alice in Bondageland* constructs a pornographic Wonderland in which sexual play and female empowerment go hand in hand (2018, 98–99). Mistress Alice sees the legacy of Dodgson’s photographs of Alice Liddell and other girls as relating to the ‘complex relationship between the novels, coming of age, and female agency’ (Marks 2018, 113). Through the pornography she creates, Mistress Alice seeks to

⁹ Some of the films that Marks refers to include: *Alice in Fetishland* (2000), *Alice in Bondageland* (2000), *Fetish Fairy Tales 3: Alice in Summerland* (2005), *Alice in Savageland* (2008), and *Alice in Tickleland* (2009).

reclaim this agency as a way of rejecting 'Victorian patriarchal control and exploitation of female sexuality' (Marks 2018, 98).

Pornography has long been a contentious subject for feminists, with positions tending to be polarized into those who view all pornographic material as violence against women, and those who define themselves as 'sex-positive feminists.' This is not the space for us to elucidate those debates, but it is worth noting that pornified Alice appropriations, such as the examples discussed by Marks, complicate the stance of second-wave radical feminists such as Andrea Dworkin and Catherine MacKinnon by their empowerment of women as creators, authors, directors, and controllers of these sexual fantasies. Pertinent to our argument is the rejection of the sexual stasis that many feminist critics and female pornographers alike perceive as central to Carroll's *Alice* narratives. The authorial emphasis on maintaining Alice's pre-adolescent innocence is overturned by pornographers such as Mistress Alice, who celebrate female sexual maturation and link it firmly with agency and autonomy.

Within the pornography industry, hardcore renderings of Alice abound, which suggests that this iconic text is perceived to be one inherently adaptable to erotic material in various ways. There are, of course, differences in the ways that these sexualizations of Alice manifest—from empowering women to take control of their fantasies and desires, to more problematic examples which sustain the historical associations with abuse and pedophilia. In the final section of this chapter, we will consider an Alice afterlife, which deals with the sexual aspects of, and abuse allegations surrounding, their Ur-texts in a very different way.

American McGee's games, which constitute a dark spin on the Alice stories, have been incredibly successful across numerous platforms, including Sony Playstation, X-Box, and PC. The games have also generated a host of transmedia products, from novelizations, art books, fan fiction and fan videos to 'cosplay performance and makeup tutorial and DIY gadgets' (Kérchy 2016, loc. 698).

In the first game, Alice is incarcerated in the Gothic Rutledge Lunatic Asylum, following the death of her family in a house fire. In the sequel, *Alice: Madness Returns* (2011), which we will focus on in the rest of this chapter, Alice has left Rutledge and is living at the Houndsditch Home for Wayward Youth in London, run by the sinister Dr Angus Bumby.¹⁰ As well as her seeming benefactor, Bumby is Alice's psychiatrist and the chief aim

¹⁰The version discussed in this chapter is the 2011 PS3 game.

of his therapy is to prevent her from regaining her memories; forgetting the past, he maintains, is the only way to recovery. Due to Alice's madness, Wonderland has become a twisted and corrupted place, a reflection of her broken psyche. The object of the gameplay, then, is to return Wonderland to its former state, freeing it from the tyranny of the evil Dollmaker and his Infernal Train. To achieve this, Alice must recover her memories and unearth the truth about the death of her family.

In an interview, McGee declared his intention to avoid engaging with the allegations of pedophilia against Dodgson: 'we were not going to be in the business [of] talking about, dealing with, passing judgment on, or otherwise including Lewis Carroll in these games or in the storyline, or in the fiction, or in the inspiration or anything' (Kohlt 2011, 11). In offering a reason for this decision, McGee stated 'it's too far gone, [...] it's just too muddy and who knows [...] it's not our story' (Kohlt 2011, 11).

Yet, despite his assertions, Carroll haunts the game's storyline, and pedophilia and sexual trauma underpin this afterlife. Rather than name his protagonist simply 'Alice,' the retention of 'Liddell' cements the association with the real-life Liddell-Dodgson relationship and all its controversial history. Through the dual gameplay (which oscillates between the reality of Victorian London's slums and the dark fantasy-world of Wonderland), McGee's Alice embodies two people merged in one: the real-life Alice and the fictional character. In this way, rather than distancing himself from the pedophilia allegations, McGee reflects the blurring of historical and textual Alices found elsewhere, which is then compounded when child abuse is placed at the center of the plot, something implied by the overtones of Freudian repression in the game's title.

The game distances itself from the pedophilia debates, yet remains haunted by them, through a series of displacements. Unlike in Roiphe's novel, Carroll is not implicated in child abuse; this is transferred to Dr Bumby. The truth about the past that Alice uncovers at the end is that Bumby raped and murdered her sister, Lizzie.¹¹ He set fire to Alice's home in order to cover his tracks, thus also causing the deaths of her parents. Beneath his respectable veneer as a philanthropist and scientist, Bumby is actually a purveyor of children, whom he controls through hypnosis and sells into sexual slavery in Victorian London's murky underworld. His

¹¹ It is worth noting that the BBC documentary also interrogates new 'evidence,' which suggests that Dodgson may have had an inappropriate relationship with Alice's elder sister, Lorina.

counterpart in the corrupted Wonderland is The Dollmaker, a grotesque puppeteer, who preys on the insane children of Wonderland, erasing their minds, so that they become merely featureless dolls. There are displacements elsewhere too. Alice's father is associated with the White Knight, who, in *Through the Looking-Glass* is associated with Carroll himself.¹² Carroll therefore in McGee's game becomes split into two characters, though never fully present: as Alice's father (who has a keen interest in photography) and Dr Bumby/the Dollmaker, the abuser who has power over Wonderland and is also the Svengali attempting to control Alice and her memories. Thus, if the real-life Dodgson is apparently absent (as McGee intended), he is also present through the male authority figures in Alice's life and also in the form of a letter from 'Mr Dodgson' in Alice's room. The latter, though a mere prop, is significant in linking back to the historically rooted figure of Dodgson, amid the varied fictionalized versions.

In the final scenes, Alice confronts both the Dollmaker and Bumby, having recovered her memories. In these cut-scenes there is an emphasis on Alice's guilt and complicity in past abuse: 'I live in a training ground for prostitutes. My mentor is an abuser and purveyor; I've been complicit with my sister's murderer and the killer of my family, as he corrupted my mind' (McGee 2011). The caterpillar reinforces this sense of Alice's culpability, when he advises her: 'Abusers are insufficiently punished for the damage they do. Those who witness abuse, without seeking retribution for the harmed pay a penalty' (McGee 2011). Given that the corrupted Wonderland is a product of Alice's tortured psyche, these instances of blame and self-blame are symbolic of her survivor guilt and repressed trauma at her sister's abuse.

Like other afterlives, *Alice: Madness Returns* contributes to the sexualization of Wonderland through its disturbing themes of child abuse, rape, and prostitution, but approaches these issues differently. In contrast to the voluptuous Alice characters referred to elsewhere, McGee resolutely resisted pressures to overtly sexualize his protagonist. He has said on record that he aimed:

¹² Alice's family is configured differently in McGee's game. Alice's father is called Arthur and is Dean at Oxford. Alice has only one sister, called Lizzie. By semi-fictionalizing Alice's life, McGee has it both ways: she is freed from her biographical rootedness, while the retention of the Liddell name maintains the association with the Dodgson-Liddell story.

to become a voice to Alice, and [to] make sure that some things they were trying to do—like lowering the front, or raising the dress, or bringing up the skirt—stuff like that wasn't natural, because it wasn't natural to her. And I don't mean to say 'Yeah, maybe we should give her bigger breasts because that's gonna sell better' or 'we should shorten her skirt because we must sell.' But my position was always to try to go to defence with the product, on behalf of Alice, because this isn't who she is and what she is. (Kohlt 2011, 8)

The game's position, then, is not one of titillation, but one of indictment: the image of the Dollmaker, particularly in the final cut-scenes, is a powerful visual demonization of the abuser. In this way, Carroll's haunting of this adaptation aligns with Hernández and Ruiz's suggestion of a 'working-through' of 'sex-related traumas and iniquities, both past and present' (2014, 6).

Even when reworkings of the *Alice* books—and of Alice's relationship with Dodgson—attempt to depart from the complex allegations that have posthumously dogged him, they are never fully able to exorcize the rumors that now haunt his reputation. Thus, transmedia neo-Victorian reworkings of Alice utilize, adapt, and dramatize both the text and the allegations. Moreover, irrespective of their motivation, they are a working through of sex-related traumas from the past and present. *Still She Haunts Me* and *Alice: Madness Returns* are inherently neo-Victorian in that they (re)interpret, (re)discover, and (re)visé historical narratives (Heilmann and Llewellyn 2010, 4); they restage the debates outlined at the beginning of this chapter, regarding the innocence or otherwise of both Carroll's texts and his life, and they do so in a neo-Victorian context, through the key trope of hauntedness.

The central question arising from such re-readings is, of course, why? Why is *Alice* or, indeed, a fictionalized Liddell, considered an ideal medium onto which inappropriate adult desires are projected? Alice is a cypher, an unsullied image of childhood purity upon which anything can be transcribed: her innocence can be 'sexexploited,' reconfigured as empowering, or reworked through a pedophilic gaze. She can be all these things at once and the multiplicity of her afterlives renders her eminently adaptable for different cultures, contexts, and media. Read through a neo-Victorian lens, Alice is—and, it seems, will remain—haunted by the salacious suggestions that now underpin reworkings of Dodgson's beloved text.

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Alice in the City

Joanna Madloch

In her introduction to the book *Alternative Alices: Visions and Revisions of Lewis Carroll's 'Alice' Books*, Carolyn Singler emphasizes the resilience of the nineteenth-century writer's works in the face of passing time: 'In high schools and universities *Alice* books are regularly taught in English Literature classes and appear on virtually every Victorian "great books" bibliography. They are the most widely quoted books after the Bible and Shakespeare's plays [...]' (1997, xii). This abiding popularity of *Alice* in its native English language is supplemented by the books' global expansion. In its 150-year history, *Alice* has been translated into 174 languages, securing its status as an international bestseller and introducing *Alice's*

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mythos¹ to numerous cultures around the world.² According to Gillian Beer, *Alice*'s success is achieved mostly due to the story's 'remarkable capacity to absorb new context' (2016, 1) and its ability to expand beyond its original world. The remarkable flexibility of Carroll's stories is inherently rooted in the concept of *Alice*'s dual audiences. Warren Weaver, the author of *Alice in Many Tongues*, argues that *Alice in Wonderland* is, in effect, two books: 'a book for children and a book for adults' (1964, 7) allowing each audience to read the text in various ways, find it appealing for different reasons, and interpret it in divergent contexts.

This chapter is rooted in the author's personal fascination with the *Alice* books, which she discovered only as an adult, due to the relatively low popularity of Carroll's works in Poland, where she grew up. The author fully agrees with Beer, who notices that the '*Alice* books continue to spark ideas for philosophers, graphic novelists, psychoanalysts, pantomimes, advertisers, children, astronomers, filmmakers, gamers, and artists' (2016, 1), but she is most interested in the presence of *Alice* in the material structure of the twenty-first-century urban landscape and its commercial conditioning. The author visited, experienced, and photographed all the locations described in this article. The majority of these trips fall under the category of 'pilgrimage,' described by Will Brooker in *Alice's Adventures: Lewis Carroll in Popular Culture* as the practice of 'visiting geographical sites associated with the author, actor, film, series, singer, or saga' (2004, 281), which is often overlooked in academic research. Specifically for this study, the author searched exclusively for places related to the fictional world of *Alice*, but not to the books' author or any of his real-life connections. The research was conducted mainly in London and New York, but also includes *Alice*-related findings encountered by the author in other places. The sites described in this study are interpreted as both specific forms of adaptations of *Alice* and manifestations of her mythos, offered for the widest possible audience who perceives them at various levels, depending on their familiarity with the books, interest in the subject, or even the degree of personal engagement with a particular environment at a specific moment.

¹ I am using this term after Will Brooker, the author of *Alice's Adventures: Lewis Carroll in Popular Culture* (2004).

² The three-volume book *Alice in a World of Wonderlands: The Translations of Lewis Carroll's Masterpiece* by Jon A. Lindseth and Alan Tannenbaum (2015), completed for the 150th anniversary of *Alice*'s publication, is a testimony to the scholars' herculean effort to catalog and describe over 9000 editions of Carroll's books published.

Contrary to the author's expectations, London is not a place brimming with *Alice*-related references. A promising mini-guide titled 'The Curious London of Alice in Wonderland'³ published in 2015 in Londonist.com concentrates primarily on locations associated with real-life people connected to the creation of *Alice*—Lewis Carroll, Alice Liddell, and Sir John Tenniel—who all remain outside of this chapter's focus. Nevertheless, it still lists the 'iconic' *Alice*-related places in the city: Alice Through the Looking Glass boutique, located on Cecil Court, and Mad Hatters Afternoon Tea on Berners Street. The former was envisioned by its co-founder, Jake Fior, as 'a trip from the repressed Victorian madness of Lewis Carroll to the free expression of '60s psychedelia,'⁴ and it certainly fulfills this promise by offering an extraordinary experience for both die-hard *Alice* fans and more casual shoppers with an affinity for oddities from the Victorian era or the 1960s. The shop features a plethora of *Alice*-related objects, ranging from high-end rare book editions to luxurious heritage objects, unique *Alice*-related art collectibles, and more affordable gifts, such as t-shirts and stationery.

The store also holds a collection of items not intended for sale, including Tenniel's original *Alice* chessboard. When the author visited the boutique in September 2018, she was informed by the staff that the large mirror adorning the back wall once belonged to Alice Liddell herself. The fact that the mirror bears a strong resemblance to the looking glass portrayed by Tenniel in *Alice* books illustrations accentuates the store's connection to the fictional world of the text. In addition, the shop's large front window, which displays the objects offered for sale, also acts as a mirror, reflecting the street outside the store. These two images superimpose on the surface of the window, creating a dynamic, ever-changing visual palimpsest, which complements the sense of wonder evoked by the *Alice*-like world inside the store while enhancing the notion of the outside physical world as an illusion. The boutique manages to combine the quaint

³ See londonist.com/2015/02/the-curious-london-of-alice-in-wonderland. The page states that it was updated in February 2017. Another interesting list of '17 Wonderful Activities for *Alice in Wonderland* Fans' around England can be found on a popular buzzfeed.com website buzzfeed.com/emmacooke24/curiouser-and-curiouser.

⁴ See timeout.com/london/shopping/alice-through-the-looking-glass.

and peculiar atmosphere of Carroll's books with its real-life commercial success.⁵

Mad Hatters Afternoon Tea stands not far beyond Through the Looking Glass, in the Fitzrovia district's fashionable Sanderson Hotel, which advertises the experience as 'a tea party [...] inspired by the whimsical world of Alice in Wonderland.'⁶ As any Carroll fan knows, Chapter Seven in *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* is titled 'A Mad Tea-Party,' and when Alice joins the party, there are three companions at the table: a Dormouse, a March Hare, and a Hatter. However, only the Hatter, who in the *Alice* mythos gets permanently associated with the notion of the party's 'madness,' consequently gets characterized as 'mad' himself. This happens despite the fact that nowhere in the book does the narrator call the Hatter 'mad.' It is only the Cheshire Cat who alludes to both the Hatter and the March Hare's 'madness' during his exchange with Alice in 'Pig and Pepper,' Chapter Six of the novel. Later in the same conversation, he extends this sentiment to all the characters present in *Alice's* fictional world through the much-quoted statement, 'We're all mad here' (Carroll 2013, 49).

Nevertheless, while the Hatter's 'madness' has been conventionally accepted and long exploited in *Alice*-inspired pop culture (see also Chaps. 7 and 19 in the present collection), there is only one Hatter in the book, and the Sanderson Hotel uses the nominative plural form of that name. This is an extraordinary decision given that most of the commercial establishments featuring the Hatter in their names have chosen a singular form of the noun either in nominative (*Mad Hatter Pub* in Montreal, Canada; *Mad Hatter Pub* in Commerce Township, Michigan; *The Mad Hatter Bar and Grill* in Indianapolis, Indiana) or genitive case (*Mad Hatter's Café and Bake Shop* in Durham, North Carolina; *Mad Hatter's Pub* in West Peoria, Illinois; *Mad Hatter's Hide Away Smoke Shop* in Rochester, NY). The Sanderson Hotel's choice results in confusion among both the

⁵It should be mentioned that the shop holds intellectual property of the trademark 'Alice Through the Looking Glass,' which protects its rights. For example, in 2017 the London-based retailer sued the Walt Disney Company for the infringement of copyrights after their release of the 2016 movie titled *Alice Through the Looking Glass*. See the commentary to the legal dispute provided by the largest intellectual property and technological law firm in the US, Knobbe Martens: knobbe.com/news/2017/03/curiouser-and-curiouser-copyrights-and-trademark-rights-are-not-perfect-reflections.

⁶See morganshotelgroup.com/originals/originals-sanderson-london/eat-drink/mad-hatters-afternoon-tea.

reviewers, who often mistakenly write about The Mad Hatter's Afternoon Tea at Sanderson,⁷ and even its own associates.⁸

The key to understand the use of plural form might be hidden in the hotel's Instagram hashtag, ImAMadHatter, which seems to suggest that people posting photographs on this feed somehow identify themselves with the Hatter, and therefore create multiple 'Hatters collective.' However, the Hatter is portrayed in *Alice*'s world as a rather strange and not particularly attractive or fashionable male character, while the Instagram feed confirms the author's observation that Mad Hatters Afternoon Tea is attended predominantly by young women in trendy outfits who choose the venue to celebrate birthdays, bridal showers, and other special occasions. At the same time, children seem to visit Mad Hatters Afternoon Tea sporadically, and those who do are almost exclusively female, well-behaved, smartly dressed, and accompanied by equally fashionable adults. All this fortifies the conclusion that Mad Hatters Afternoon Tea is geared mostly to adult customers who seek a refined and luxurious experience.

When the author visited this establishment in September 2018, the restaurant was decorated with pink flamingos, the only element of its décor somehow reminiscent of *Alice*. Decisively, it is the table arrangements and the menu where *Alice* references abound, including 'Chocolate and Pistachio Blue Caterpillar,' 'White Rabbit Cucumber and Cream Cheese Sandwich on Pesto Bread,' 'Tweedle Dee Lemon Curd Financier,' 'Wonderland Marshmallow Magic Mushrooms,' and 'Alice's Exotic Fruits "Drink Me" Potion.'⁹ Nevertheless, the Hatter himself is almost completely absent from the experience named after him.

This stands in striking contrast to most of the other commercial establishments bearing the name of the Hatter. In the food and drink industry, the Hatter's 'madness' is often used to signify widely understood fun and various levels of debauchery. For example, The Mad Hatter, a Washington, DC restaurant famous for its New Year's Eve masquerades, turns the notion of 'madness' into its trademark allure, which they promote on their

⁷ See squaremeal.co.uk/restaurants/best-for/best-vegan-restaurants-in-london_9452, theinfatuation.com/london/guides/best-restaurants-in-fitzrovia-london, londonist.com/london/food-and-drink/vegan-afternoon-teas-in-london.

⁸ For example, Luna and Curious, the company that provides tableware for tea and is featured on the hotel's website, still calls Sanderson's tea *Madbatter's Afternoon Tea*.

⁹ See morganshotelgroup.com/assets/pdf/uploads/ac/47/21/snd-mhat-menu-may-2019.pdf.

website: ‘Remember madness is happiness & there is a little Madhatter in all of us.’¹⁰ Such an approach can be exemplified by The Mad Hatter’s G & T Party, which the author attended in New York in September 2018. This was a pop-up experience offered in East Williamsburg in Brooklyn and according to AM New York, during the event’s five-week run, more than ‘8,000 mad individuals had pre-registered for tickets.’¹¹ The experience consisted of a two-hour performance held on the second level of a stationary double-decker bus with its interior transformed into an *Alice*/Victorian-themed cottage. Three actors portraying the original characters of the ‘Mad Tea Party’ in Carroll’s book served the guests colorful drinks in china teacups and entertained them with *Alice*-related jokes, songs, and games. Collectively playing the role of Alice, the guests followed the literary heroine’s example by switching seats during the party and attempting to solve the Hatter’s riddles (Fig. 15.1).

Irony and humor, sometimes bordering on burlesque, were among the crucial elements of The Mad Hatter’s G & T Party. Judging from the



Fig. 15.1 The Mad Hatter’s G & T Party, Williamsburg

¹⁰ See madhatterdc.com/about-us/.

¹¹ See amny.com/eat-and-drink/alice-in-wonderland-cocktail-pop-up-1-17848618/.

author's personal impression, on-line reviews, and the event's Instagram feed, the vast majority of the participants appreciated the slightly psychedelic atmosphere created by the actors. While familiarity with the *Alice* books was not a prerequisite for enjoying the party, it certainly enhanced the experience by adding a trans-textual level to it. Numerous attendees sported *Alice*-related costumes, tattoos, and jewelry, which bolsters the assumption that they chose the event because of its relation to the books. In this context, The Mad Hatter's G & T Party can be considered an example of a tribute, described by Brooker as 'performing fandom' (2004, 285). The participants' level of involvement is what differentiates performing fandom from a pilgrimage. Minimal activity maintained mostly at the low passive visitor-spectator level, in cases where one simply travels to a place associated with a particular book or author, rises to active participant when one partakes in a performing fandom event, where the participants' active involvement is essential to the experience. While The Mad Hatter's G & T Party in Williamsburg ran only for a couple of months, the number of *Alice*-themed parties in Los Angeles, Chicago, and London demonstrates the demand for providing this kind of expression to *Alice* fans.¹² Nevertheless, it must be noted that this form of performing *Alice* fandom is exclusively geared toward adults. Compared to the Sanderson Hotel's Mad Hatters Afternoon Tea, The Mad Hatter's G & T Party takes a meaningful step away from Victorian restraint and sophistication, which is actually satirized in *Alice's* books, and leans more toward the playful, absurd 'madness' implied in Chapter Seven of *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*.

In *Homo Ludens: A Study of the Play Element in Culture* (1992), Johan Huizinga describes separation from ordinary life as essential to creating the optimal conditions for play. According to the writer, this detachment of play from everyday life is secured by both its temporal and spatial limitedness. To play, an individual has to freely step out of their ordinary existence and into the defined space of the 'playground,' where he/she will remain for a limited time only. For the duration of play, the quotidian laws must be suspended and replaced by the rules of play. As the participants observe these new rules, they encounter a state of uncertainty, intensifying the feeling of tension in the realm of play. The 'charm of play is enhanced by making a "secret" out of it' (Huizinga 1992, 12), as both the elements

¹²Fever website promises *Mad Hatter Gin and Tea Party* to come to New York in 2020. See feverup.com/m/80929.

of secrecy and the inherent contrast to reality can be further enriched by costumes or other forms of dressing up. The Mad Hatter's parties, which grant access to those who freely buy tickets and last for about two hours in a limited indoor space, fulfill this definition by also encouraging participants to wear costumes and inviting them to play according to the absurd rules of the *Alice's* realm. At the same time, in the nonsensical world of *Alice*, the rules can be defined as 'un-rules,' which heightens the notion of unpredictability and tension present in play, as described by Huizinga. This element is most vividly represented in another *Alice*-related, New York City-based multimedia theater dance titled *Then She Fell*, which has been running successfully for its seventh year in New York City.

The immersive theater experience produced by The Third Rail Project is located behind an unassuming door on a mostly residential street in Williamsburg. Aside from a small graphic sign that features the name of the show and the notice that the door opens 20 minutes before the experience starts, nothing outside the building hints about the extraordinary event that runs inside for two hours. However, once the door opens, the participants step into a three-story realm transformed into an *Alice*-related mental hospital, inhabited by actors impersonating characters from Carroll's books, Charles Lutwidge Dodgson himself, and the 'medical staff' of the hospital. Secrecy plays a key role in the experience. Immediately after entering the building, the 15 participants are informed that no recording of any kind is permitted. Participants are also not allowed to talk, unless spoken to by one of the actors, or communicate with anyone in any way. This results in the experience being perceived as very individual or even isolating, despite the fact that the participants often stay in close proximity to the actors and one another.

As immersive theater, *Then She Fell* does not offer a traditional stage/audience division. The experience happens in the labyrinth of halls and rooms, which each participant visits either by themselves, led by a member of the hospital's 'staff,' or as a part of a small group of other participants. Lavishly decorated rooms feature various episodes from both *Alice* books and from Carroll's biography, especially his personal relationship with Alice Liddell. In this environment, the audience either watches the actors performing scenes loosely inspired by the books (erotic duel between the White and the Red Queens, the Red Queen torturing the White Rabbit) or becomes a part of the performance, sometimes in the company of both actors and other participants (having tea with The Hatter, Red Queen, and White Rabbit) but often being left to interact with just one actor

(playing the shell game with a mysterious doctor, combing Alice's hair while discussing love and disappointment). While these examples come from the author's personal experience, during the evening, every one of the 15 participants is presented with a different version of *Then She Fell*. This further contributes to mysteriousness, secrecy, and isolation of the experience.

As it is indicated by the title, the experience revolves around the notion of falling and losing control. While moving from room to room as a pawn in a game of chess, one loses track of time as the dimly lit labyrinth confuses the senses. The temporal/spatial disorientation is further propelled by eerie music, olfactory stimuli, and possibly intoxication, since throughout the experience the participants are served small portions of alcohol. The notion of a split personality is strongly present in the show, while the stage design underlines reflections and distortions with the use of omnipresent mirrors. A participant is often confronted with their own, sometimes askew, mirror image, and they never can be certain that at any particular moment they are not being watched by other participants from a different room. This certainly adds to overall tension and anxiety of the experience, which rise both from being left alone or in uncomfortable proximity to the actors in extremely claustrophobic spaces and from the realization that there is a great margin of unpredictability inherent in this experience. In this sense, *Then She Fell* is rooted in its own paradoxicality. In order to run swiftly, the experience must be carefully organized and controlled, but its main purpose is to give the participants the illusion of fantasy, where the rules of everyday life are either constantly questioned or are just replaced by the un-rules of absurdity.

While The Mad Hatter's G & T parties entertain participants with jokes, riddles, and laughter, *Then She Fell* makes no attempt at humor. Instead, the experience creates an enigmatic and mystifying atmosphere interspersed with elements of eroticism, violence, and sometimes horror. The experience follows the tradition of interpreting Carroll's works in the convention of a Dark Wonderland, exemplified by the 2015 performance by the same name that took place at Brooklyn's Green-Wood Cemetery in honor of the 150th anniversary of the book, or the *Alice*-based video game *American McGee's Alice* (2000). Nevertheless, despite these differences, both *Then She Fell* and The Mad Hatter's parties interpret the text as a story to be read in an adult context and are therefore addressed to adult participants only. Other *Alice*-related places in New York City, such

as the *Alice in Wonderland* bronze sculpture located in Central Park, welcome a more age-diverse public (Fig. 15.2).

The bronze sculpture authored by José de Creeft is possibly the most recognized and the oldest testimony to Alice's presence in the city. The landmark was funded in 1959 by philanthropist George Delacorte with the intention of letting children 'experience the wonder of Lewis Carroll's colossal story.'¹³ The sculpture features Alice sitting on a giant mushroom, surrounded by the Hatter, the White Rabbit, the Cheshire Cat, the Dormouse, and Alice's cat, Dinah. All the characters are easily recognizable, since they resemble the original illustrations by Tenniel for Carroll's books. The most important thing about the sculpture is its performative character. It was not built to be watched passively, but to be climbed and enjoyed interactively instead. The author of this chapter visited the sculpture numerous times, and on each occasion, it was almost constantly occupied by children. While children enjoy *Alice* as a playground, adults engage with the sculpture by making it into one of the most popular photo



Fig. 15.2 Alice in Wonderland, Central Park, NYC

¹³ See centralpark.com/things-to-do/attractions/alice-in-wonderland/.

opportunity spots. Interestingly, people not only take photographs with the sculpture in the background, but they also interact with it in humorous ways, by climbing under the large mushroom, hugging the Hatter, or trying to grab the watch from the White Rabbit's hand. This notion of careless playfulness embedded in the signature *Alice*-related landmark of New York extends to another nearby popular *Alice* attraction, Alice's Tea Cup, which serves both food and *Alice*-related experiences at two different locations in Manhattan.

Alice's Tea Cup was founded in 2001 by two sisters whose goal was to create a place which would serve afternoon tea to both adults and children with- and without a special occasion.¹⁴ The two branches of the enterprise, Chapter One and Chapter Two, are located on the Upper West Side and Upper East Side of Manhattan, respectively. In addition to serving breakfast, brunch, and afternoon tea, Chapter Two organizes children's parties in the upstairs area, featuring a server in Alice costume, as portrayed in Tenniel's illustrations and immortalized by the 1951 Disney movie animation. Both Alice's Tea Cup Chapters have casual, inviting atmosphere marked by colorful *Alice*-themed décor. Interior design includes numerous paintings featuring *Alice*-related scenes in various interpretations and ranging from reproductions of Tenniel's original illustrations to modern portrayals of the characters. Numerous photographs show a young smiling woman in Alice costume, reenacting the Mad Tea Party in company of animated young people. Quotations from *Alice* books, and various creative miscellanea, such as gigantic keyholes on the kitchen door in Chapter One further complement the décor (Fig. 15.3).

While Tea Party is a dominating decorative motif in Alice's Tea Cup, in their interpretation Alice herself becomes a hostess of the party. The switch from the portrayal of Alice as a slightly confused guest trying to figure out the rules of the unknown world to a confidently smiling mistress of the ceremony pouring tea for visibly pleased guests removes the notion of anxiety usually associated with the Mad Tea Party. Instead, the implied madness of the party is replaced with the notions of fun and adventure, supplemented with an element of magic. The only detail that a die-hard Carroll fan can object to is the presence of fairy-related items—fairy dust, which guests can be sprinkled with upon arrival, and fairy wings, which

¹⁴ See alicesteacup.com/about/.



Fig. 15.3 Alice's Tea Cup, Chapter One, NYC

some children choose to wear.¹⁵ This deviation, however, does not hurt the overall experience of Alice's Tea Cup, which is a favorite neighborhood place for many regular patrons. By treating its young customers seriously, and allowing adults who frequent the place their share of careless play, Alice's Tea Cup materializes inherent duality of *Alice* audiences. At the same time, it provides its patrons with an essential element of play—temporary release from reality outside the door and an opportunity to enjoy themselves in the secluded space of the playground.

Another NYC place that concentrates on delivering the *Alice* mythos as a purely fun and casual experience is an interactive pop-up museum named *Wonderworld: Pop Up Wanderlust*, temporarily available at various locations. The author visited the museum in Williamsburg in the fall of 2019, during its second installment in New York. In 2018, the museum occupied the original Andy Warhol studio, and the signature Warhol style prevailed in the space despite the change in location. The experience consisted

¹⁵ In his letter to Tom Taylor dated June 10, 1864, Carroll stressed that the world he created includes birds and beasts endowed with speech, but no fairies. See themorgan.org/exhibitions/online/alice/9.

of 11 installation spaces, and the visitors were invited to actively interact with the environment, which as a result of this interplay, is constantly and randomly re-created. Upon entering the vividly pink building, the participants are informed that *Wonderworld* was created by its authors as an embodiment of *Alice's* next chapter, an individual re-write that invites participants to discover their 'inner Alice.'

Nevertheless, Carroll's story is not as present in *Wonderworld* as it is alluded to be. Neither Alice nor any of the other original characters are present in any of the rooms. Instead, the experience uses *Alice's* references as props: participants can play oversized cards, hide among large colorful mushrooms, pretend to drink from human-sized cups, use gigantic teaspoons, and chase their reflections in omnipresent mirrors. All this happens among a variety of pop-artsy decorations, which include Grecian columns, phone booths, and one human-size yellow plastic head imitating a classical sculpture. The bizarre array of objects brought together in *Wonderworld* refers to the 'fantastical' and 'dreamed up' characteristics of Carroll's Wonderland. There is nothing even vaguely sinister or ambiguous in this colorful, well-lit, and photography-friendly space, and as observed by the author, taking selfies and posting on Instagram is an essential part of enjoying *Wonderworld* (Fig. 15.4).

The similar concept of multisensory entertainment was applied to the creation of *Dreamscapes* in Salt Lake City. The website advertises the exhibition as 'a world of dreams, where immersive physical and digital artworks take you on an ethereal journey'¹⁶ suitable for all ages. *Dreamscapes* is a dynamic, interactive exhibition produced by more than 100 Utah artists, who collaborated on the project, which is constantly evolving. When the author visited *Dreamscapes* in March 2020, a couple of *Alice*-related elements were present in the set-up. This includes the question 'Who are you?' with which the Caterpillar addresses Alice in Chapter Five of Carroll's tale. In *Dreamscapes*, the phrase seems to be uttered by two owls, which testifies to the rather casual use of the references. The main goal of the exhibition is to create the atmosphere of a dream and play, and the elements of *Alice's* world, such as mushrooms in psychedelic colors and oversized, distorted clocks serve this purpose, without pointing directly to Carroll's works. The presence of a little crocheted Alice doll in the lobby

¹⁶ See <https://www.dreamscapesslc.org/>.



Fig. 15.4 Wonderworld, Williamsburg

of the establishment suggests, however, that the creators of the experience are conscious of its indirect connection to *Alice* mythos.¹⁷

By providing examples, it is easy to determine that in the second decade of the twenty-first century, the *Alice* mythos remains widely present in Western cultural code and consciousness. In the urban spaces of big cities, however, the different characters created by Carroll receive varying degrees of attention and recognition. The Hatter, or rather The Mad Hatter, as this character is almost always designated in popular culture, dominates the scene, being used most often in the food- and drink-related industry. In this context, Tenniel's original illustration of the character still prevails as a principal visual concept. Not surprisingly, the name is also often applied to hat-making businesses, such as shops in Oran, Missouri, and in Port Townsend, Washington.¹⁸ However, The Mad Hatter name is also often adopted by seemingly random branches of business. For example,

¹⁷ On this display Alice doll finds herself in the company of a Batman and a Cthulhu. The sign informs the potential buyers: 'Nope. They aren't voodoo dolls.'

¹⁸ The last store makes some visual allusions to the *Alice* mythos on its website madhatterandcompany.com/.

there are at least two Mad Hatter chimney sweep service companies, in Indianapolis, Indiana, and in Powell, Tennessee; fireplace and grill store in Alpharetta, Georgia; massage and wellness company in Oglethorpe, also in Georgia; and muffler and brake services in Omaha, Nebraska, and in Columbus, Ohio. The popularity of the Hatter's name among so many trade and service owners seems unexpected, since in a business context the name has been long-associated with negative connotations related to 'an ill-equipped leader or CEO of a company who has assumed power as a result of his/her being a founder of the company, nepotism, or a poorly-thought-out succession protocol.'¹⁹

Behind the Hatter, on the scale of modern popularity, there is Alice herself, but not as a child. She is no longer a seven-year-old, but as observed by Terrance Riley, 'in 21st century culture Alice is an adult' (2017, 6). Among the places described in this article, only the Central Park statue depicts Alice exclusively as a child. The family-friendly Alice's Tea Cup portrays Carroll's heroine as a child, as a teen, and as a young woman in her early twenties, when in *Then She Fell*, Alice is a tortured adult plagued by a split-personality. This last portrayal strongly resonates with numerous modern 'crazy' and even institutionalized versions of Alice featured in fiction, which include Christina Henry's *Alice* (2015), A.G. Stone's *Spades: The True Wonderland Awaits* (2015), or Alyssa in A.G. Howard's *Splintered Series* (2013–2015).

Among *Alice's* characters, the use of the White Rabbit stands out as the most problematic. During her research, the author encountered numerous places named after the herald to the Queen of Hearts, including The White Rabbit Studio and Café in London's Shoreditch, White Rabbit Tattoo Studio in Manhattan's Lower East Side, and outside the UK and US, The Legendary White Rabbit Saloon in Gdansk, Poland. Nevertheless, even though The White Rabbit Studio displays numerous white rabbit statues outside the building and boasts the clearly Carrollian domain,

¹⁹ See investopedia.com/terms/m/madhatter.asp.

followthewhiterabbit.co.uk, there are no other obvious visual signals suggesting any connections between these places and the *Alice* mythos.²⁰

In addition to establishments named after the Hatter, Alice, and the White Rabbit, the author encountered The Walrus & The Carpenter pub in London, featuring a Lewis Carroll room for special events, as well as a wonderful Stockholm boutique named Very Important Clothes. The last find was, however, completely accidental. Like Alice, who ‘is not seeking, she is only finding’ (Beer 2016, 46), the author tends to stumble upon *Alice* without planning it. This happened in 2016 in Quebec, Canada, where Salvador Dali’s sculpture of Alice was displayed by the Hudson River; in 2017 in Torun, Poland, where the author spotted the Cheshire Cat among other puppets in the front window of the children’s theater Baj Pomorski, or during the same year, when she noticed a girl approaching a giant inflatable white rabbit, creating an unmistakably Carrollian moment during the White Night Festival in Melbourne, Australia (Fig. 15.5).²¹ Sometimes Alice appears in abundance in the least expected places. In 2020, while visiting Utah, the author spotted the classical Alice portrait displayed on the wall in one of the many Salt Lake City’s tattoo parlors,²² and on the same day encountered a drinking fountain adorned with a quotation ‘Drink me’ in a second-hand clothing store.²³

‘*Alice* is a perfect set up for the game. It is a game,’ said the friendly manager of the *Alice in Wonderland*-themed escape room in Uppsala, Sweden, when the author asked her what inspired the creators of the

²⁰ It has to be mentioned, however, that in some places *Alice* references emerge only after more careful inspection, or they appear in unexpected locations. When the author visited The Mad Hatter Hotel in Southwark, London, in September 2018, the staff informed her that the place had no association with Carroll’s books. The hotel is located in a former hat factory building, and the ‘mad’ component in its name came from the recognition of a common ailment that plagued hatmakers in the nineteenth century, which was caused by mercury exposure during the process known as carroting or felt curing. Even though the author did not find any *Alice*-related imagery during her brief visit to the hotel’s public spaces, internet research disclosed some of the rooms in the hotel are decorated with reproductions of Tenniel’s *Alice* illustrations. Similarly, after a staff member of the White Rabbit Tattoo Studio denied its connection to *Alice*, the author noticed a poster featuring the Hatter on one of the walls. Finally, the only visual representation of the *Alice* mythos in the Brooklyn restaurant Rabbithole is a tiny drawing of a rabbit on the menu, which closely resembles Tenniel’s iconic illustration, as well as on the ‘wash your hands’ sign in the restroom.

²¹ The giant glowing rabbit was a part of an installation titled *Intrude* by an Australian artist, Amanda Parer, and it consisted of numerous inflatable animals.

²² Ember Steel Tattoo parlor is located at 283 E 2100 S, Salt Lake City, UT 84115.

²³ See Uptown Cheap skate Sugarhouse located at 2120 S 1300, Salt Lake City, UT 84106.



Fig. 15.5 A Scene from Amanda Parer's *Intrude* Installation

experience, which gives the participants 60 minutes to find the clues, solve the riddles, and escape from the room. Without a doubt, Alice's adventures, which involve games of cards and chess, make a particularly suitable canvas for this kind of urban amusement. In addition, both the *Alice* books, though *Through the Looking Glass* to a significantly greater degree, strongly reflect Huizinga's definition of play. Alice (relatively) voluntarily leaves her everyday world to enter a realm where she moves through limited space for a limited time while playing according to the (un)rules of that place. This is all the more evident because the heroine's progress in *Through the Looking Glass* imitates the moves on a chessboard.

Naturally, this study presents a small part of the rich spectrum of *Alice*'s uses around the world, and the author is aware of its open-endedness. While concentrating on the Western, mostly American and English cities, the chapter does not include any adaptation of *Alice*'s mythos to urban space in Asia, where it flourishes, especially in Japan. According to the website favy-jp.com, there are four *Alice*-theme cafés in Tokyo alone, and they often combine dining experience, addressed mostly to adult patrons,

with the elements of play.²⁴ According to Brooker, every interpretation of *Alice* depends on the atmosphere and mindset of its current time. For example, psychoanalytic reading, which dominated the 1930s interpretations of the books, was replaced by a psychedelic vision of *Alice* in the 1960s (Brooker 2004, 345). Judging from *Alice*'s representation in the urban landscape, our current anxiety-laden era chooses to see *Alice* as play, or more precisely, a game of escape. This interpretation is further supported by the particular popularity of both the Hatter himself and the Mad Tea Party he hosted in the book, which served as spatial-temporal trap for the creatures who attended it. In Wonderland, when other characters were stuck at the party, Alice moved forward and eventually 'escaped the room.' In the twenty-first century, the portrayal of Alice as an adult questions the happy ending of Carroll's original story, possibly suggesting that she never solved the riddle and ended up staying in the world *Behind the Looking Glass*, ultimately accepting that 'we are all mad here.'

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²⁴ See <https://favy-jp.com/topics/2333>.

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Transformations: Aimer's 'I Beg You' and Alice in Japanese Music Video

Masafumi Monden

Lewis Carroll's stories of Alice have had a strong following in Japan since the first Japanese adaptation of *Through the Looking-Glass* was published in the late nineteenth century (Kusumoto 2001; Monden 2015; Fraser 2020).¹ According to one study, nearly two hundred editions of Japanese translations of *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* and *Through the Looking-Glass* (including reissues) were published between 1908 and 2004 (Sakakibara n.d.). Although originally written as children's tales, in Japan the stories have attracted adult audiences, as they have in many other countries. However, there are subtle but important differences in the Japanese adaptations. Alice tends to be more mature, especially when the

¹ Hereafter I use *Alice* to refer to Carroll's two books and Alice to the character. I thank David Jellings for his meticulous reading and editing of this chapter.

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stories are re-told for adult women audiences (Fraser 2020) and the narratives are often more focused on visual, rather than literary, culture (Myers 2016, 301). The latter is partly explained by the difficulty of translating Carroll's complex wordplay into Japanese. From the beginning, Japanese versions of the stories have been linguistically simpler.

No such translation is required visually, of course, and specific elements such as the depiction of girlhood have resonated strongly with Japanese audiences. Alice is an icon that demonstrates both change and continuity. The visual identity of Alice was largely formed by Sir John Tenniel's celebrated illustrations (1865 and 1872) and Walt Disney's classic film *Alice in Wonderland* (1951), which was first released in Japan in 1952. With some immortal Alice objects, however, many similar yet different variations of the heroine have sprung over the years, making Alice an icon of protean and multiplicity, shifting in her shape and appearance (Vaclavik 2020, 187). So why has *Alice* captured the imagination of so many Japanese? While there may be a number of reasons, this chapter focuses on Alice's relationship with the Japanese concept of *shōjo* in popular culture through an examination of references used in music videos.

Carroll's heroine Alice is viewed in Japan as an embodiment of the concept of *shōjo*. Although the term literally means 'girls' in Japanese, *shōjo* stands for a cultural imagination, an iconic representation of femininity and girlhood in Japanese culture. This conceptualization is largely the result of the work of children's studies scholar Masuko Honda. Inspired by her own experience as a (former) *shōjo*, Honda's work offered an innovative theory of *shōjo* and the aesthetics of 'fluttering' in *shōjo* culture. Light, decorative 'girlish' ornaments including ribbons, frills, and lace symbolize the unfettered *shōjo* world, an imagined realm of a floating yet resilient 'girl-scape' (Honda 1992, 177–78). For Honda, the liminal time of *shōjo* offers a brief period of liberation between the restrictions of childhood and the rigid constraints of everyday life as an adult woman, a space which momentarily shelters them from patriarchal responsibilities and concerns (Honda 1992; Yagawa 1981).

Originally this 'girl-scape' was constructed under a patriarchal notion of femininity, with the aim of directing young women to focus their interests internally, rather than on the outside world, keeping conventional gender codes and roles unchallenged. Because of a tendency to undervalue or trivialize the girl/*shōjo* in the cultural realm (Aoyama and Hartley 2010, 2–3), the *shōjo* and her culture has, until recent times, not merited serious public consideration or academic scrutiny. This disinterest, Honda

argues (1992, 179–82), contributes to the relative autonomy the *shōjo* enjoys within her world, where she is allowed to safely express a self-centered nature, and is temporarily able to transgress and blur boundaries, including moral ones, without any urge for ‘worldly benefit or sexual desire.’

Alternative masculine readings of *shōjo* appeared around the same time as Honda’s theories were first published. These readings of *shōjo* by male writers and critics often involved demeaning and stereotyped views of the *shōjo* as a mere consumer category, or an impossibly innocent yet simultaneously sexualized object of men’s desire (see Shibusawa 1985). Both positive and negative conceptualizations of *shōjo* have given the figure of the adolescent girl a greater prominence in Japanese popular culture, and Lewis Carroll’s Alice is perceived as the metonym of the *shōjo* image.

Although she is a child about seven years old in Carroll’s books, Alice tends to be imagined, particularly in illustrations, as a girl in early adolescence (Brooker 2005). One of the reasons for this visual ‘misrepresentation’ can be found in the fairly independent personality of the young protagonist. If we consider Honda’s concept of the *shōjo* as being of sweet and innocent appearance but with considerable autonomy within the *shōjo*-scape, these portrayals of an adolescent Alice are arguably a better fit. Despite her appearance as a demure Victorian-era child, Alice is depicted as having independence and a strong sense of self. As Will Brooker (2005, 145) points out, Alice is never troubled by the grotesque inhabitants of Wonderland, nor is she terrified with the fear that she may not be able to return home. Throughout the novel, she remains largely calm and optimistic.

Similarly, Catherine Driscoll notes the complexity of Alice, saying she ‘is as self-interested as she is generous and is not unambiguously a good girl (i.e., loving, courteous, or trustful),’ and ‘the little girl in Carroll is marked by curiosity and delight’ (2002, 43). In the afterword to her Japanese translation of *Alice*, Sumiko Yagawa (1994, 181), one of the most prominent Japanese translators of the novel and a famous literary figure of the *shōjo* genre, offered her interpretation of Alice as a symbol of loneliness attached to autonomy. Yagawa praises Alice as ‘a shining eternal *shōjo*’ (1981, 47), and writes of her: ‘she has become the most transparent example of the *shōjo* concept, being accepted as an archetype of any *shōjo* from the past to present’ (1981, 122). Alice is neither assertive nor passive, but positioned comfortably somewhere in between, and her rather

aloof, self-interested, and independent personality resonates with the Japanese feminine constructs of *shōjo*.

Alice's references to *shōjo* is further conveyed by her dress. Tenniel's illustrations are particularly important since the image of Alice as cultural icon has been largely defined by his visual imagination. Carroll's books are notably vague about the appearance of their characters and settings, relying on illustrations from the outset rather than on written descriptions (Brooker 2005, 143). The picture of Alice now so familiar to us comes largely from the illustrations of John Tenniel which accompanied the first edition of *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*. This Alice holotype wears a simple, 'little girl' dress with a bodice, short puff sleeves and a tiny turn-down collar, and a straight, full skirt with rows of tucks at the hem, overlaid with a pinafore and completed with plain, light stockings (replaced with large stripes in *Looking-Glass*) and flat ankle-strap shoes with rather square toes (Ewing 1977, 97). Interestingly, this was not what Carroll imagined Alice should look like, but Tenniel prevailed, and his vision, reinforced by Disney's animation, has informed most subsequent visual depictions of Alice.

Tenniel's Alice and her dress convey Victorian girlhood or feminine adolescence. Alice is symbolic of Victorian upper-class girlhood (Jones and Gladstone 1998, 75; Brooker 2005, 100), and the dress styles of Victorian girls seem to have inspired Japanese *shōjo* fashion aesthetics (Monden 2019). The image of Alice has indeed had a significant contemporary influence on Japanese women's fashion. From the widely discussed sub-cultural style of Lolita, to established fashion labels like Milk, Jane Marple, and Emily Temple Cute, *Alice*-inspired sartorial items have been widespread (Monden 2015, 2019), attesting to the popularity of *Alice* in fashion in Japan, particularly among young women.

Another area of visual culture in Japan with links to fashion is the music video, where *Alice* also enjoys a recurring presence. Music video is 'about the song's and image's relation, and what that meeting point conveys' (Vernallis 2016). During the 1980s in Japan there were already a large number of music TV programs, so music videos were less important as promotional media for music sales than in the US, where sales linked to MTV drove the evolution of the music video (Mizojiri 2006, 113). Instead, Japanese music videos developed more as independent consumer products (Mizojiri 2006, 115).

While music video draws some production techniques from film and television, the form generally lacks the conventional narrative structures

found in classic Hollywood films (Vernallis 2004, 3; Howells and Negreiros 2012, 285). The form can hold almost all conventions of the moving image subordinate to the creation of visual spectacle. As we discuss later in this chapter, stories like *Alice* that revolve around 'memorable solid objects' (Fraser 2020, 324) are therefore very useful to the music video maker.

Alice has been a popular music video theme for both female and male artists, particularly in Japan. Male musicians tend to play the role of the Mad Hatter in their music videos (as is the case with Buck-Tick in 'Alice in Wonder Ground' 2007 and Hyde in 'Fake Divine' 2018). Unsurprisingly, female musicians often cast themselves as Alice.² I have argued elsewhere that for some female artists (such as Alisa Mizuki 'Eden no machi' 1991; Tommy February⁶ 'Bloomin!' 2002; Kaela Kimura 'Snowdome' 2007) embodying the image of Alice in their music videos allows them to express the complexity of *shōjo* identity. Outwardly expressing a sweet, *kawaii* (cute) aesthetic by wearing largely asexual, childlike, Alice outfits, they simultaneously subvert or parody the sugar-coated, doll-like passivity demanded of them as pop idols by portraying more active roles in their music video, asserting their independence and creative control over their musical production (Monden 2015). In male artists' *Alice*-themed videos, Alice tends to be depicted as an object of the gaze of the Mad Hatter/artist, and is often played by a younger woman. Female artists instead prefer to portray Alice as a more active protagonist, albeit largely a non-sexual one. But what happens when Alice is portrayed as an object of the gaze in a female artist's music video? Japanese female pop singer and lyricist Aimer's music video for her song 'I Beg You' (2019) offers an excellent opportunity to explore *Alice* references in this regard.

Aimer made her music debut in 2011, and her 16th single 'I Beg You' topped the chart, becoming her first number one single. 'I Beg You' was used as the closing theme of the anime feature film *Fate/Stay Night [Heaven's Feel] II. Lost Butterfly* (2019, hereafter *HF*). *HF* was one of a series of anime movies made as part of the transmedia franchise *Fate*, set in a fictional version of contemporary Japan where magic exists. The music video for 'I Beg You' was directed by well-known film, TV, and music

² Japanese singer Kiyoshi Hikawa, who has recently enhanced his androgynous appearance, appears both as the Mad Hatter-like prince and Alice in his music video to 'Fushigi no kuni' (2020). Depicting Alice as a boy or androgynous character is also not uncommon in Japanese literary/manga culture.

video director Takahiro Miki (b. 1974) and stars Minami Hamabe (b. 2000), an actress regarded as a rising star, reputed for both her girlish beauty and acting skills. Since the music video was uploaded on January 9, 2019 to the ‘Aimer Official YouTube Channel [n.d.](#)’ it has received more than twenty-six million views.³ Aimer sings the theme songs for all the three movies in the *HF* series, with the accompanying music videos all directed by Miki and starring Hamabe.

According to the author of *Fate/ Stay Night*, the *Heaven’s Feel* trilogy is intended as a gloomy tale, and Aimer reveals in an interview that she sympathizes with that sense of melancholy (Abe 2020). The most tragic character in the movie is the heroine, Sakura Matō, one of the romantic interests of hero Shirō Emiya. Behind her innocent and demure appearance, Sakura is spiraling into a mental collapse caused partly by the long years of physical and sexual abuse she has suffered, and the excessive magical energy she channels. At the end of *HF Lost Butterfly*, she finally breaks down and metamorphoses into her ‘dark’ self, embarking on a series of mass killings.

‘I Beg You’ was written and composed by Yuki Kajiura (b. 1965), famous for the songs she has produced for hit anime and TV programs including the *Alice*-themed *Pandra Hearts* (2009), *Puella Magi Madoka Magica* (2011–2013), and *Demon Slayer: Kimetsu no Yaiba* (2019–2020, in collaboration with Gō Shīna). The song is intended to express the interiority of Sakura, particularly her egotism and desires (Abe 2020). Kajiura affirmed in an interview that, in contrast with the theme song to the first *HF* movie ‘*Haru no uta* [Song of Spring]’ which depicted Sakura’s love for Shirō, ‘I Beg You’ was intended to unveil Sakura’s morbid psychological state by emphasizing her aloof, egotistic personality and calculating mind (Kajiura, quoted in Nakamura 2018). The lyrics convey the manipulative mind concealed by Sakura’s apparent humility:

Show me mercy, I beg you
Grant me pity, I beg you
Like caressing a tiny fallen bird
Look down with your teary eyes
And roll me around with the toe of your shoe
While uttering that you’re feeling sorry for me
It doesn’t matter if you do that

³ As of August 1, 2021.

[...]
 The frightened little bird
 Couldn't say goodbye
 She kept quiet with only a gesture for begging love
 Believing that was a display of modesty
 Lie, lie, it's a lie, not a lie, it's hard to bear
 I've been hurt too much
 Everyone wishes they could leave for a world with more compassion
 [...]
 I know you're here to stay with me
 All I want is to be loved

The first and second verses and chorus convey Sakura's pitiful mental state, indicating that she is balancing on the edge of sanity. In the middle eight, where the music slows down with increasing melancholy, she sings:

Only sorrow piles up like snow
 Covering up desire and regret
 The spring day we tied our bond
 Faraway in the past, and even my scars
 Are they all going to fade away?

Here there is a glimpse of reality, just before landing on the final chorus where she again lapses into her dreams and self-pity. Kajiura incorporates a Middle Eastern rhythm in the music, creating a sense of a foreign wonderland for Japanese audiences. While the visuals and the song do intersect to create meaning, the lyrics have no direct connection to Carroll's *Alice*. But part of the reason for the use of *Alice* objects in the song is made clearer when we look at its original context within the movie.

'I Beg You' appears twice in *HF Lost Butterfly*. Most prominently, the song is used in full over the closing titles, just after we learn that Sakura has metamorphosed into her dark self and murdered her jealous and abusive stepbrother. But the melody is also heard earlier in the film, rearranged in a waltz tempo with an eerie music-box instrumentation, in a scene where Sakura arrives in a forest with gigantic mushrooms and flowers. She is greeted by cute, pastel-colored stuffed animals including a rabbit and caterpillar. Led by these animated animals, Sakura marches through the forest to a Gothic-style castle, muttering childish nonsense. There she finds herself surrounded by more of the little stuffed animal creatures. With an innocent, childlike gesture, Sakura flicks one in the forehead with

her finger, which turns the creature into a shower of candy, much like a pinata. Once she discovers this, she proceeds to crush more of them, smiling as they transform into piles of sweets. The next scene reveals that the candy animals were a dream that Sakura experienced as she committed horrendous atrocities while sleepwalking under the influence of a dark force within her; in reality, the stuffed animals she crushed with her magic are innocent people she murdered and dismembered, the candies their bloodied and severed body parts.

This dreamscape has obvious references to *Alice*, with elements such as the mushroom forest, the rabbit and caterpillar, and the nonsense words, the innocence of the symbols used contrasting with the horror of reality in an almost schizophrenic dissociation. Sakura's dark reimagining of Alice's journey in the film is what inspires the use of similar motifs in the music video. But it is not necessary to have watched the movie to understand the music video—it stands as an independent work. It is significant that in seeking visual symbolism that immediately connotes childhood and innocence to Japanese audiences, both the film and music video directors have successfully used the English iconography of *Alice*.

The music video of 'I Beg You' is considered as an 'anti-performance piece,' that is, a video that does not contain a performance of the song (Railton and Watson 2011). Aimer never appears in the video, so not only are there no shots of her performance, but the artist herself is absent. Diane Railton and Paul Watson (2011) propose four genres of music video. Using their criteria, 'I Beg You' would arguably be a hybrid of two of these categories, namely 'art music video' and 'narrative music video.' As we shall see, the music video's use of the *Alice* theme is useful for both its artistic expression, and the rather abstract, non-linear narrative.

The music video indeed begins with a close-up of vintage reel-to-reel tape recorder, which is turned on as the song begins, creating a diegetic source of the music. As Aimer's voice is joined by an electric guitar, the camera cuts to a close-up of Hamabe, her face hidden behind two pairs of hands that reach in from both sides of frame. The video then intercuts between four main scenes. The first is a dimly lit room, with Hamabe lounging with in an armchair holding a white stuffed rabbit in her hands, watchful but with a sense of ennui. The room is a cross between an antique store and a toy box, packed with a chess board, a merry-go-round music box, a number of clocks, the tape recorder, and several large stuffed animal toys. The second scene shows a room with mirrored walls, where Hamabe sits on the floor holding a huge pocket-watch, the mirrored walls creating

multiple images of her that fill the frame. The third scene is an exterior, an arbor arch that extends into a tunnel of vines, with shafts of sunlight illuminating the misty atmosphere which Hamabe wanders through before discovering an open space with a large tree. The final scene is an Edwardian-style merry-go-round after dark, where Hamabe wanders and explores. Intercut with the main scenes are more abstract and artistic images. Close-ups of mirrors on the revolving merry-go-round, abstract details rendered in an animated kaleidoscopic fashion, two figures with animal masks (a rabbit and a goat) who dance uncannily, and close-ups of Hamabe gazing into her mirrored image are repeatedly inserted, giving the video a rich, dreamlike, and psychedelic quality, albeit with a distinct sense of unease.

The narrative takes an unexpected turn in the third chorus. As Hamabe is standing under the large tree, she becomes distressed, drops to her knees and coughs up a tangle of black, thin animated lines resembling tape. A cut back to the original room briefly shows Hamabe in the chair, now entangled in audio tape from the open reel recorder. Back at the tree, Hamabe tries to contain the animated tape in her hands, but it sprays out over the dancers' faces, and to Hamabe's horror, the dancers slowly collapse. As the vocal enters the last part of the chorus, the video cuts back and forth rapidly between the room, where Hamabe is trying to free herself, grabbing at the tape that entwines her and sweeping away the chess board; and a close-up of Hamabe and her reflection in the mirrored room. The penultimate shot of the video is of Hamabe and her mirror-self, eyes closed, her head and hand touching the mirror surface, making physical contact with her mirror image. As the vocal finishes and the accompaniment stops, the mirror image slowly opens her eyes, looking directly to camera as she begins to smile, while Hamabe's eyes remain closed. The scene dips to black but as the music ends, we have one final glimpse of Hamabe in the original room, bound to the chair by the audio tape and either unconscious or lifeless, before the camera pulls back and fades out.

Media communication theory posits that a given message might be decoded differently by different receivers, and hence the original intention of the message or the sender is not prescribed or guaranteed (Hall 1980). Viewers unfamiliar with *HF* will have no trouble in interpreting the symbolism of the 'I Beg You' video independently, although the references to *HF* add a layer of meaning, if only that of the fan's insider knowledge. The *Alice* references in 'I Beg You' are independently significant of the use of similar references in *HF*—either can be understood without reference to the other.

For those unfamiliar with *HF*, the music video's references to *Alice*, especially its use of visual props, are important in making sense of the narrative part of 'I Beg You.' The 'narrative music video' genre is defined as one that 'tells a story' (Railton and Watson 2011, 55). In the case of 'I Beg You,' while there is a beginning and ending, the narrative exposition is not entirely linear. This is partly because of the video's nature as a hybrid of the 'art music video' genre where visual aesthetics and effects (like the mirror reflections of Hamabe and the kaleidoscopic effects) are prioritized over the narrative. Since music video is a short form, and does not necessarily have a linear narrative, physical items such as clothes and other 'objects' that evoke a familiar story serve as a signpost for the spectator (Vernallis 2004, 101). Referencing fairy tales and well-known stories such as *Alice* is particularly effective, because fairy tales consist of and are conveyed symbolically by using archetypal characters and recurrent motifs (Warner 2014, xix). Such stories are generically recognizable even when the exact identity of the particular story is not clear. *Alice* is a trove of such references, with rabbits, pocket watches, forests, chessboards, and looking glasses, as well as a narrative of transformation and change. All of these can signal *Alice* popular culture references to the spectator (Fraser 2020, 324), allowing the video to tell a story in visual shorthand.

The 'I Beg You' video is full of recognizable *Alice* objects. These include rabbits (the white stuffed bunny and the dancer with a rabbit mask), repeated mirror images, the chessboard, the arbor and green tunnel, and the oversized pocket watch. The unsettling atmosphere and the strange eerie movements of the dancers resemble elements of Guillermo del Toro's film *Pan's Labyrinth* (2007, examined in Chap. 11 of the present collection), which itself was strongly inspired by Carroll's *Alice* and other fairy tales (Edwards 2008). Aside from the *Alice* objects, plot elements such as the arbor leading to the green tunnel, the distorted scale of elements in some scenes, and following an anthropomorphic rabbit into the unknown, are also clear *Alice* references.

It is noteworthy that 'I Beg You' avoids many other obvious *Alice* objects and narratives that appear in other music videos, such as the Mad Hatter, the Cheshire Cat, the Queen of Hearts and playing cards, potion drinks and body transformation, falling underground and so forth. This perhaps reflects the creators' intention to avoid the impression that the music video is directly about *Alice*. Indeed, none of the staff involved in the creation of this music video, including the director, the artist, actor or stylist have mentioned the work's references to *Alice*. Instead, they allude

to its atmosphere: 'a beautiful, chaotic world' (Aimer); 'a chaotic world of *shōjo*' (Miki); 'a wonderland' (Mochizuki, stylist of the video), and 'I acted the role as I was immersed myself in the chaotic world of the music' (Hamabe). In order to visually communicate an image of this chaotic world, borrowing elements from the 'random and chaotic' Wonderland of *Alice* was a useful technique.

One of the direct *raison d'être* of music videos is as an advertisement to sell music (Railton and Watson 2011, 1), and thus music video is often discussed as having similarities to advertising. But there are similarities well beyond this. Structurally, advertisements often rely on semiotics, visual sign systems comprised of a signifier and a signified. If advertisers choose signifiers (people or objects) that do not strongly signify a particular concept, the messages that advertisers intend to communicate are less limited, if less focused (Howells and Negreiros 2012, 122). *Alice* motifs, on the other hand, are particularly strong signifiers especially when used in combination. Because of this, their use needs to be done in a subtle way to suggest the association but avoid the final signified becoming *Alice* and overwhelming the world of 'I Beg You.' To do this, the creators have added non-*Alice* references, such as the carousel, which fit the mood aesthetically but have no direct connection. Specific *Alice* signifiers are also modified or subverted to create a sense of unease—the rabbit has been transformed from the comical March Hare into a somewhat disturbing masked human figure, the change in the signifier unsettling the viewer's expectation of what the signified might be.

In addition to chaotic, the other term that the director, singer, and the actor use frequently when describing the music video is *shōjo*. The director Miki describes the video as showing 'the chaotic, delusional world of a pretty and dark *shōjo*' (quoted in Natalie 2019). Aimer remarks on Hamabe's performance in the video: 'Minami vividly expressed the multi-faceted nature of the song through her eyes—which were at times that of feeble, solicitous *shōjo*, and other times a fearless, precocious look' (quoted in rockin'on.com 2019). Hamabe herself recalled that on the shoot for the intended sequel to 'I Beg You' 'Miki instructed me to display poses and nuances that allude to the image of *shōjo*' (quoted in Natalie 2020).

As already mentioned, Carroll's heroine has resonated well with the Japanese concept of *shōjo*. The adoption and adaptation of European tales like *Alice* by Japanese culture exemplify the process of 'localization' in models of cultural globalization and syncretism, with an increasing disruption of existing center-periphery models (Appadurai 1993, 275). Alice can

be a signifier in a second-order sign system, representing a different signified in other cultural contexts like Japan (Monden 2015, 97; Myers 2016). Arguably in the case of 'I Beg You,' *Alice* becomes a form or signifier that carries the *shōjo* as her content or signified. In Western music videos, male artists tend to represent Alice characters dressed and behaving like 'little girls' with the artists often assuming more powerful positions, whereas female artists prefer to create more mature versions of Alice, with high fashion outfits (Gwen Stefani in Galliano dresses, 2004) or with a classic feminine look (Avril Lavigne's 'Alice' video, 2010). Given *Alice*'s narrative of a girl who is not framed within heterosexual romance and her role as a signifier of *shōjo*, Alice allows Japanese female artists to parody the *kawaii* (cute) look by performing pre-adolescent girlish femininity while deliberately eschewing the role of a romantic object for any male figures. Artists such as Mizuki (1991), Tommy February⁶ (2002), and Kawase (2007) have all utilized this approach (Monden 2015). 'I Beg You' uses a more nuanced approach which emphasizes Hamabe/Alice's delicate beauty rather than childlike cuteness, and presents her as an object of the gaze, both ours and her own.

Hamabe's dress becomes important here. In music video, clothing functions as a signpost that quickly reveals a character's role and relationships (Vernallis 2004, 101). With rare exceptions, Japanese female performers who play the role of Alice in their music videos wear dresses that refer to the children's dress style of upper-class, late-Victorian England (Monden 2015). The pre-adolescent qualities of these Japanese performers are emphasized by the short, 'little girl' skirts that historically were worn by children before adolescence (Rose 1989, 126–27), and which have become a subset of the *kawaii* (cute) fashion aesthetic.

In contrast, stylist Megumi Mochizuki dressed Hamabe in a white vintage dress of Gunne Sax, a now-defunct American clothing label that specialized in Victorian and Edwardian-style designs. Like Gunne Sax's other earlier designs, the dress Hamabe wears resembles that of an Edwardian tea dress, whose long lace skirt reaches her ankles, considerably longer, more elaborate, and elegant than those which other performers have worn in their Alice videos. Her dress and associated gestures (such as holding the skirt when moving) make Hamabe look more princess-like than an upper-class Victorian girl. While other female artists adopt a much younger look and parody cuteness, 'I Beg You' instead underlines Hamabe's late adolescent *shōjo* quality, emphasizing the beauty and allure of a *shōjo* who is at the liminal cusp between girl and woman.

Hamabe's display of conventional, melancholic girlish beauty, together with her role as a character rather than a performer, makes her an object of the gaze. Most other Japanese music videos portraying Alice feature the singer in the role of Alice, lip-syncing their songs in a more active performance and seeking a connection with the viewer by assuming a direct gaze. Except for rare instances Hamabe does not look directly to camera, offering herself as an object to be gazed at. Some Freudian readings have criticized this sort of portrayal of adolescent girls as a product of a male gaze, desire, and masculine fantasy (Bruzzi 1997, 37). These interpretations assume an equivalence of physical beauty with sexual desire (Marwick 2004, 1). But it is important to consider that gazing upon physical beauty can be a purely aesthetic appreciation and is not necessarily sexualized (Scruton 2009, 159). Elaborate, vintage outfits like the one Hamabe wears may also operate against the heterosexual objectifying male gaze rather than serving it (Bruzzi 1997, 14). Indeed, Honda's *shōjo* aesthetic argues that decorative sartorial items like lace and flounces, exactly like the dress Hamabe wears, may signal girlishness while simultaneously draw attention away from her body by concealing its shape, and so perhaps avoid sexualization.

There is no male presence in the video, with the possible exception of the dancers but their sex and gender are ambiguous. While Hamabe seems to take delight in their antics at times, the only romantic connection suggested in the video is that of Hamabe and her own image, as she leans in to kiss herself in the mirror room. The reference to Narcissus is unmistakable here, illustrating another facet of the *shōjo*, her self-centeredness. Hamabe's self-love emphasizes her position as an object of the gaze, excluding contact with the viewer as she focuses entirely on herself. 'I Beg You,' therefore, reimagines Alice as a girl on the verge of womanhood, whose ethereal beauty and melancholic mood invite an aesthetic appreciation rather than a sexual fantasy. The slow motion used for many of the scenes highlights her melancholic beauty in scenes reminiscent of a wonderland laid waste.

Carroll's original *Alice* stories, although intended for children, have darker elements both within the text and the context it inhabits. There is a duality associated with Carroll's books, largely informed by Carroll's 'enigmatic' sexuality, including speculation about his possible pedophilic attachment to children, although this is unproven (Brooker 2005, 64) (see also Chaps. 4 and 14). Nonetheless, performing pre-adolescent Alice carries a risk of female artists/actors being viewed as sexualizing

themselves for an objectified (male) gaze. ‘I Beg You’ creates its darkness not through sexuality, however, but by subverting the objects and forms, such as the rabbit dancers with their uncanny dance movements and finger tutting, and the erratically lit carousel at night operating devoid of people. Signifiers which would normally connect with signified concepts like innocence or childhood, such as the rabbit, are mutated to create an atmosphere which is simultaneously *kawaii* (cute) and Gothic, conveying *shōjo* as a state of dualities, beautiful yet dark, innocent yet decadent. The use of the mirror in juxtaposing the two images of Hamabe, one an innocent subjected to the chaos of wonderland, and the other an enigmatic, darker figure filled with *ennui* and aloofness, occupying the same body, is an explicit visual allusion of the dual aspects of the *shōjo*.

Japanese girlhood and womanhood are often associated with the dichotomous moral codes of ‘good’ and ‘bad’ girls (Miller and Bardsley 2005, 2). This vagueness—or perhaps unity—is what defines an ideal representation of *shōjo* identity in contemporary Japanese popular culture. One of the notable aspects of the cultural imagination of a *shōjo* is her ambivalence—sometimes she is pure and innocent, at other moments cruel and merciless (Orbaugh 2003). ‘I Beg You’ utilizes mirrors (another memorable *Alice* object) to outline a vague line of demarcation between innocent and dark *shōjo*, while acknowledging their ability to coexist. In doing this, the music video questions the boundaries of *shōjo*; from child-like, cute, and independent *shōjo* to the more imaginative, ethereal, or dark *shōjo*.

The music video of ‘I Beg You’ shows us the possibilities *shōjo* offers to represent more complex, ambivalent, and transgressive identities. It offers an insight into the strength of adoption into Japanese culture of *Alice*, providing a set of strong signifiers that can withstand distortion and still carry the multi-dimensionality of the concept of *shōjo*. The highly girlish, melancholic yet largely asexual image of Alice in the music video allows exploration of an aesthetic, rather than sexualized, objectification of Alice/*shōjo*, situated somewhere in the middle of empowering (by female artists) and passive (in male artists’ videos) continuum of Alice performances. Taken together, the elements of ‘I Beg You’ illustrate how more subtle readings of representations of gender and beauty can be accomplished in the music video form.

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Navigating the Coded Rabbit Hole: A Sociocultural Reading of American McGee's Alice Games

Dominique Angela M. Juntado and Antonio Sanna

The twin 'Alice' novels by Lewis Carroll have been easily loaned to diverse kinds of symbolic interpretation (Gardiner and Carroll 2000). On instances, passages from the books have been instrumental in the discourses by logicians, scientists, philosophers, and even theologians as much as they have been used in public and household matters (Kiebel 1974, 605). This chapter focuses on American McGee's *Alice* (2000), a third-person, action-platformer videogame that was inspired by Carroll's books, but provides a macabre and reflective game on how guilt from a family tragedy leads to the corruption of the childhood dream that is Wonderland. In the sequel, *Alice: Madness Returns* (2011), the protagonist finds herself attempting to make sense of the tragedy, which requires her to retrace many past events in order to find the means to clear both her

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consciousness and her name. This chapter examines the two games in terms of how Alice's interactions with certain locations, events, and characters represent her progressive socialization, and specifically the process of acquisition of many behaviors, practices, and values required to be a member of society. Among the experiences of socialization represented in the games, this chapter examines the progressive acquisition of autonomy and assertiveness on the part of the protagonist, her interactions with the other characters, her experience with school and with the working conditions of the time, and her defiance of maternity and adulthood.

The characters of Carroll's books have often become the subject of videogames, appearing as either the games' protagonists (as in Windham Classics' 1985 *Alice in Wonderland*, Virgin Games' 1990 *Wonderland*, and Quin Rose's *Heart no Kuni no Alice* series [2007–2014]) or merely as secondary characters that the players encounter or adversaries that are to be defeated (as is the case of Toshiba-EMI's 1991 *Alice: Interactive Museum*, Nintendo 64's 1997 *Chameleon Twist*, Square's 2002 *Kingdom Hearts*, MMORPG's 2003 *Maple Story*, and Nintendo DS' 2009 *A Witch's Tale*). Two Nintendo games (dated 2000 and 2010) have been respectively inspired by—and reproduce the events occurring in—the Disney 1951 and 2010 films. The most popular and successful videogames based on Carroll's stories nowadays are *American McGee's Alice* and its sequel *Alice: Madness Returns*. The former is set in 1874, after the story's protagonist has been rendered catatonic for years following a fire that killed her family, and can be considered as a third adventure created for the heroine. The dark-haired Alice's journey to Wonderland is actually a mental retreat dictated by trauma. In *American McGee's Alice* the protagonist's is therefore a dark, adult quest that develops through a gloomy version of Carroll's Wonderland characterized by astral, foggy, vertiginous, and labyrinthine settings, where Alice must kill the Queen (a conflation of Carroll's Queen of Hearts and the Red Queen, who is alternatively called with both names in the game) to restore the fantastic world's integrity as much as her own. In the sequel, Alice, now living in an orphanage, has to fight a new evil force in Wonderland in order to face her trauma and recover her sanity and confidence in socialization. Her major rival, the Dollmaker, is revealed to be the fictional counterpart of her doctor, the man who is responsible for her sister's rape and her family's death in the fire.

McGee's Alice Liddell is depicted as a Victorian girl who exercises a certain degree of agency: she is around about fifteen years old in the first game and nineteen in the second episode, and, as in the original novel,

‘both child and adult and a person in transition’ (Kincaid 1973, 93). Alice’s assertiveness (which has been noted by several critics examining the nineteenth-century text) is visually indicated in McGee’s game by means of her very appearance and attire. On the one hand, she wears the iconic outfit she has long been associated with since John Tenniel’s original 1865 illustrations: a knee-length, puffed-sleeved dress with a pinafore, her feet dressed in ankle-strapped shoes. The blue color of her dress follows from the character’s appearance in the 1951 Disney animated film. On the other hand, however, the videogame adds a few novel details, such as Alice’s silver necklace with an Omega pendant, possibly an allusion to the end of her happy past and the corruption of Wonderland by tragedy and personal trauma. The pockets of Alice’s pinafore are embellished by the signs of the Earth and Jupiter, whose juxtaposition perfectly symbolizes the struggle internal to Alice, her determination to fight and grow—the Greek deity Zeus was associated with war-like tenacity (Graves 2011, 53)—in order to be grounded again in the real world. Finally, the blood spattered on the lower half of the pinafore indicates that Alice has attempted to take her life in the real world, out of guilt from being the sole survivor of the tragedy that exterminated her family. This is also hinted at both in the main menu (which presents an image of Alice in Rutledge asylum with bandaged wrists) and in that portion of the introduction in which she is lying awake in bed, arms to her sides, with wrists facing up, displaying scars. Alice is presented as a character who needs to heal her (psychological) wounds by facing her own trauma in order to regain access to society. At the same time, her quest through the nightmarish land of Wonderland becomes a representation of her acquisition of socialization by means of the reproduction, allusion, and reversal of Carroll’s themes and the historical context of the Victorian age that generated them. Alice faces her land of fantasy in order to return to society and its system of interactions.

Alice’s appearance is further removed from the original illustrations because she wears calve-high, black leather boots with silver buckles and, under them, a pair of black and white striped stockings—quite fitting for the varied terrain encountered in each province of both games. This evident difference from the more ‘prim and proper’ doll shoes worn by the character in Tenniel’s illustrations can be read as an objection against nineteenth-century, upper- and middle-class society’s insistence that it was unbecoming for a young lady to be adventuresome and independent. Preference of boots over doll shoes had been given a negative connotation since the days of Elizabeth Bennet in Jane Austen’s *Pride and Prejudice*

(1813), because wearing a good stout boot would have allowed increased mobility and practicality to its female bearer, a mobility that might have disturbed the patriarchal ideal of the upper- and middle-class woman as confined to the house and dependent on man.

Such an autonomy of movement is further realized in the first game by Alice's progressive acquisition of independence and assertiveness in the choice of her directions. The first form of directions available to the game's players is the map serving as a loading screen between levels: Wonderland is made of nine provinces, each location containing a particular friend or foe exclusive to it, as well as the resolution to the repressed memories associated with them. In videogames, maps are conventionally navigational documents, or, on occasions, menus allowing players to jump to a particular location. In *Alice*, the map as an introductory device can be interpreted through Peter Berger's theories of what frames 'growing up.' According to Berger, when children reach a certain age, they show an interest in finding their present and past locations on a map (1963, 66). These locations are often fragmentary representations of their memories. Children are particularly fascinated, Berger argues, by how very personal events in their lives have been set in places which are delineated by a set of 'quite impersonal' coordinates (1963, 66). With the assistance of a grown-up who knows how to read a map, a child may say that he/she has been 'there' or not, or is 'here' at present. This personalizes what is by essence colorless and detached, what is usually set by longitudes and latitudes. According to Berger, the act of locating oneself on a map is what it means to be mature because children become accustomed to the coordinates of the world set by grown-ups.

Berger further argues that the map may also be considered as a symbol for the social environment and its systems of alliances, power, and prestige. The constant need to identify or define where a person is is partly dictated by the will to place oneself according to a location's respective social, political, and cultural constraints: location within society automatically places an individual in an intersection of these social forces (Berger 1963, 67). Maturity begins when the child is able to identify his/her position on the map and learns how to orient him/herself. This theory can be easily applied to the case of Alice in Wonderland, her need to orient herself being a theme common to Carroll's original and McGee's game. In both versions of the story, Alice is unsure of the path she is supposed to take. In the book, the young protagonist initially attempts to determine her location in terms of longitude and latitude, but fails to do so as she does not have

the practical knowledge on how maps work ('Alice had not the slightest idea what Latitude was, or Longitude either, but she thought they were nice grand words to say' [Carroll 2007, 5; see also Shires 1988, 273]). Though in the game's loading screen the edges of the map page are marked with degrees and the cardinal points, the map itself only gives a general outlook of Wonderland and does not help Alice to have a sense of direction, leaving her (and the player) alone to navigate through a labyrinthine system of paths that is definitely disorienting in all the levels of the game.

In the game, Alice's search for directions is initiated as soon as she falls into the rabbit hole, where she meets the Cheshire Cat, by whom she is advised to 'ask' around as well as to 'let your need guide your behavior, suppress your instincts to lead. Pursue Rabbit.' The Cheshire Cat's initial piece of advice to Alice also implies obedience when he says 'you've picked a bit of an attitude. Still curious, and willing to learn, I hope.' This mirrors what happens in the real world, where children are initially directed by their elders while being raised, and, after they are allegedly endowed with sufficient wisdom, they are allowed a certain degree of agency. Their decisions are thenceforth based on free will, as well as on the understanding of the experiences they are facing and their ability to act on them. Society preaches in real life that a child who is 'brought up well' recognizes that free will is a privilege and not a right; and that the act of growing up means responsibility for one's actions and the ability to consistently make the right decisions in different situations. As Peter Facione argues, this has often to do with the fact that practicing good judgment increases the chances of living a life of happiness, virtue, or economic success (2011). Alice's choice of directions and her progressive autonomy in such choices (the Rabbit is killed by a gigantic Hatter at approximately one fourth of her journey and she has thenceforth to become fully autonomous) reflects both the assertiveness of the character in the original text and the need for McGee's Alice to become a mature and independent individual in order to be reinstated in society. Simultaneously, Alice's recovery of sanity and happiness begins with her progressive acquisition of control over her thoughts and overcoming of guilt. As the Caterpillar says, 'Wonderland is severely damaged. You must set things right [...] your fantasies have fragmented into tortured versions of themselves. You are wracked with guilt.' Setting things right in the otherworldly realm means that she simultaneously repairs the damage in her own mind as well.

As is the case with the original novels, Alice's assertiveness and autonomy are further manifested through her interactions with the characters she meets along the journey. In McGee's game, after falling into Wonderland Alice finds herself in the Village of the Doomed. Formerly a waterfront community, the village has been transformed into a mining district whose human inhabitants are forced into slave labor by the tyrannical Red Queen/Queen of Hearts. Alice liberates the inhabitants of the village from suffering and the oppression of the queen, simultaneously liberating herself from her own suffering and enslavement on guilt. Her subsequent interactions with the other characters in the game are then necessary for her to continue her physical peregrination through Wonderland as well as her psychological journey to sanity. In the Pale Realm, Alice has to interact first with a Bishop piece and then with a Knight piece on the chessboard floor to turn herself into such pieces in order to navigate across the room and to avoid the swords darting from the ceiling. This grants her an alliance with the white chess pieces that subsequently siege the queen's castle in the final stage of the game. Similarly, it is the Gryphon, liberated by Alice from his captivity in the realm behind the mirror, that initially leads the forces rebelling against the queen and fights against the queen's strongest servant, the Jabberwock. Alice's willingness to help the characters in Wonderland functions as an improvement of her faculty to socialize in the real world.

Alice's socialization, however, also consists in dealing with environments that she needs to face in order to be reinstated in society. A fundamental step in her growth is the experience of school (that she has not attended in the real world because she has been confined to the asylum after the death of her family). School subjects and knowledge are themes treated several times by Carroll's young protagonist. One of the most renowned passages in the novel is indeed the protagonist's encounter with the Mock Turtle, which satirizes Victorian education and the fact that nineteenth-century society placed children under considerably great amounts of social pressure, with the ultimate goal of transitioning into adulthood as soon as possible. This idea is reproduced in those parts of McGee's *Alice* set in the Fortress of Doors, whose interior is the Skool, both of which are locations exclusive to the game. The Fortress and the Skool apparently float over nothingness and are surrounded by empty space from all sides. McGee's depiction of them thus implies a false sense of intelligence and confidence on the part of those who detain knowledge and culture and, as is the case of the Ivory Tower, 'a state of privileged

seclusion or separation from the facts and practicalities of the real world' (Oxford Languages 2021). With its castle-like exterior, the Fortress is a massive and oppressive sight, with menacing, monochromatic walls patrolled by the queen's card guards, and thus exemplifying the exclusion of the masses from knowledge and culture. The many faces protruding from the walls (which exemplify the stereotypical Hollywood portrayal of souls with generic faces without gender attributes) are an instance of pareidolia, suggesting the anonymity of the knowledge and culture located within the Fortress. Also, the sides of the facade near the drawbridge each present a clock face (where there should be two loopholes instead), which can be read as the first instance of discipline and order taught at any school: punctuality. Several pendulums are present on the various floors of the Skool and the emphasis on time is also established by the repetition of the sound of chimes throughout this level of the game.

The interior of the Skool similarly plays on a sense of oppression: its flooring is broken in many places and its passages are filled with hostile and aggressive enemies Alice needs to kill. For macabre effect, the furniture arrangements are minimal. At the front of the lecture room, for example, the teacher's desk is placed on a platform, whereas the student seats are scant and in disarray. Traditional classroom setups typically consider a setting in which students recognize their instructors along geopolitical considerations: the teacher's desk requires a social distance between teachers and students, which can produce a feeling of unapproachable authority (Krych 2015). The elevated position of the desk in the lecture room further evidences the authority of the teacher, his/her distance from the learners, a distance that Alice symbolically bridges over by moving freely over it.

A second function of an elevated platform on the lecture room may be to remind students that from elevated position of the teacher, a student's movements and actions are always being watched. In the Fortress and the Skool, the sense of perennial control is reinforced by the presence of the all-seeing curtain rod, the face pareidolia on the walls, and the frosted window panes as well as the disturbing wallpapers in the higher 'Grayde' rooms and the Auditorium. This representation of the Skool seems to be shaped according to what Peter Berger defines as the more subtle forms of social control: 'persuasion,' 'ridicule,' 'gossip,' and 'opprobrium' (1963, 71). According to Berger, social control 'refers to the various means used by a society to bring its recalcitrant members back into line' (1963, 67): it is a preemptive measure against any opposition to (and deviation from) a

culture's or a group's prevailing dominant ideas, positions, or beliefs. As social institutions, schools are indeed generally characterized by a certain pressure to conformity which indirectly forces the students to adhere to the stated mission/vision, to embody traits that the school attempts to instill, and to parrot popular opinion and fads. According to Berger, students are often led to change the potentially deviant opinions they have as an act of congruity to the norm of a group (1963, 71). What lies at the foundation of this sense of pressure is the 'profound human desire to be accepted, presumably by whatever group is around to do the accepting' (Berger 1963, 72). Alice's resolution of this stage represents an assertion of her individuality and rebellion against the strictures imposed by many (Victorian) schools on children.

In contrast to smaller rooms such as the Auditorium and the lecture room, the grand library is well-stocked and pristine, which could be read as an attempt to achieve eclecticism, possibly an exaggeration of the exchange between Alice and the Mock Turtle in Carroll's book where the latter judges Alice's scholastic system as inadequate (Gardiner and Carroll 2000). In this section of the game Alice must 'liberate' a series of flying books whose subsequent positioning grants her access to the upper floors of the building. Subsequently, she has to mix a series of ingredients to make a potion that will decrease her size and allow her entrance to the Vale of Tears, the next stage of the game. Knowledge is metaphorically acquired by the protagonist in the Skool in order for her to continue her journey. Alice's resolution of this section indicates her acquisition of the social and cultural skills required in the maturation of children (and teenagers), a necessary step in the process of personal growth leading to maturity.

Once she has crossed the Vale of Tears, Alice's process of maturation continues in the realm ruled by the Hatter, the land called Behind the Looking Glass, where she needs to confront the anxieties and insecurities pertaining to the affirmation of one's identity. Here the protagonist navigates through the corridors of an asylum whose walls are made of distorting mirrors and rooms containing imprisoned, lobotomized children (a fantastic reproduction of her own experiences inside the psychiatric clinic in the real world). Her fight against the orderlies Tweedledee and Tweedledum, the Hatter's assistants, is both a step toward the recovery of her own mental stability and a critique of nineteenth-century mental institutions and the impropriety of their treatments on patients—a theme that is resumed in the sequel videogame through the brutal representation of real asylums and of the techniques adopted by doctors, including cranial

perforation and blood letting (the theme of madness is treated also in Chaps. 7, 10, and 19 of the present collection). The Hatter himself is said to have gone mad and is experimenting on children (who are dropped into a large machine smelting them with scrap metal and transforming them into mindless, mechanized Automaton) as much as on his former partners, the March Hare and the Dormouse, whose body parts have been exchange with mechanical limbs.

The Hatter also exhibits an obsession with time and clocks, as it happens during the Tea Party in Carroll's original novel. In *Alice*, this is further emphasized by the presence of numerous clocks, Roman numerals suspended in the air, and gigantic, mechanical machines and gearwheels. The dials on the many clocks encountered in the Looking Glass stage and the land behind it are either stuck at varied, fixed hours, spinning uncontrollably or missing their hands entirely, and the protagonist is forced to break their faces in order to free the Hatter's prisoners and proceed with her mission.¹ The victory over the Hatter thus signifies Alice's ability to overcome her own madness and her loss of control over time (as due to her confinement in the asylum as well as her fixation with the past) in her struggle for mental sanity and her need to acquire the normal sense of time regulating human (inter)actions in the real world.

What remains to Alice in the following environments of the game is to deal with the concepts of motherhood and adulthood, the following stages in a girl's and a woman's life. At the very end of the game Alice enters the queen's castle and fights against the malevolent ruler. The juxtaposition between the two characters' bodies characterizes this fight as the young protagonist's confrontation against the figure of the maternal woman: Alice is excessively thin, whereas the Red Queen/Queen of Hearts appears to be a combination of an organic heart and a pregnant being. The concept of maternity is reversed in this sequence, as the queen's midsection periodically opens up and displays a vagina-like sphincter that periodically flares to release an acidic green liquid and an explosive red coagulated liquid. The juxtaposition between Alice and motherhood is already evident in the nineteenth-century text by Carroll, in which, as Megan Lloyd argues, Alice never exhibits the 'cute baby syndrome' typical of young girls (in the text, she abandons the Duchess' son and thus refuses the role of women as predominantly maternal in Victorian England). In

¹ Similarly, the Hatter's Domain in *Madness Returns* uses pendulums to measure time, though, in this case, the reference is to work schedules.

the original text Alice's attitude thus epitomizes the idea that motherhood is neither a measure, nor a requirement for a woman's worth (Lloyd 2010). The character's defeat of the monstrous queen in the game is therefore an opposition against the maternal role imposed on many women in Victorian society as well as against the dichotomous characterization of them as either angels in the house or whores.

Furthermore, the queen is presented as a sort of doppelgänger of the protagonist: after an initial duel in which she assumes the form of a carnivorous plant, the monarch's face is momentarily revealed to be Alice's. The protagonist thus battles against her own self, against her monstrous side blaming her for the death of her family. Simultaneously, the final duel can also be interpreted as a rebellion against the adulthood represented by the monarch and as the final assertion of Alice's individuality (as it occurs in the novel when the young child rebels against the court during the trial). Indeed, the queen argues that the realm of Wonderland 'is for grown-ups; raw, well-ordered, ruthless, careering on the jagged edge of reality. Self-pitying dreamers are not wanted here.' The monstrous queen is a grown-up version of Alice: she is the ultimate embodiment of cold maturity, belief in order, and a ruthless reality.² She is the final obstacle

²The juxtaposition between the two characters is further established by the marked difference between their voices. The first line by the queen in the game is 'Off with her head'—a direct quotation from Carroll's work, which is however spoken in a deep pitch, sans shouting, and an almost seductive tone. This is a reversal of the representation of Carroll's Queen of Hearts, whose habit of continuous shouting, as Dennis Knepp notes, is a synesthetic display of violence by means of the translation of the force of the law into audible clues. Knepp argues that the screaming of orders (of execution) is intended to terrorize her subjects into submission (2010, 53). Where higher voices tend to be associated with youth, a lower-pitched voice is a sign of middle age and aging. According to Speech and Language Therapist Sara Harris this holds true for both sexes, when gravity 'causes the larynx to drop in the neck altering the distance from the vocal folds to the mouth' and 'the increase in vocal tract length alters its resonant features enhancing lower frequencies so the voice sounds lower' (2021). Generally, societies often equate a higher pitch of voice with the feminine. Women who have deeper voices, when speaking on radio, have on occasions been mistaken for men—37th New Zealand Prime Minister Helen Clark is one memorable case in point (Bauer et al. 2006, 153). In regular, social interaction, there is a tendency for people to use a higher pitch in an effort to sound more 'feminine,' while the effects of lowering the pitch of voice provides a more 'masculine' impression (Bauer et al. 2006, 153). Helen Clark has often employed her voice to her advantage in her field: leadership has for a significant amount of time been considered as a masculine profession and only recently has this context changed. Margaret Thatcher, the first British Prime Minister, is said to have taken lessons in lowering her voice pitch in order to sound more 'authoritative' (2006, 153).

Alice needs to overcome in order to gain the adulthood and maturity required in the real world. After her destruction, indeed, Wonderland is restored to its former glory and happiness, Alice is reunited with her friends from the fantastic land and, in the last image of the game, she is shown back in the real world while leaving the asylum with a smile on her face, having finally defeated her guilt and recovered her sanity.

In the sequel *Madness Returns* Alice alternates her visits to the desecrated land of fantasy (which includes an arctic region containing the frozen participants of the Caucus Race, the depths of the ocean, a Japanese village, and the dilapidated reign of the Red Queen) to her movements through the sepia-toned real world of Victorian London, from the orphanage she lives in and the dirty East End slums filled with the poor and prostitutes, to the foggy docks, a squalid tavern, and an underground train station. Her actions in Wonderland reflect her need to face the reality of the outside real world she now resides in. Such an interpretation is legitimized by American McGee's own words when affirming: 'what she sees in wonderland has got to be something that could be there logically, by her virtually having seen it, or heard it, or smelled it, or tasted it in the real world' (quoted in Kohlt 2012b, 7). As is the case of the first installment of the game, the protagonist's actions in Wonderland are a (psychological) preparation for her future life in society, including, possibly, finding a job in order to be independent (and therefore facing the work conditions of the Victorian age).

As Franziska Kohlt argues, *Madness Returns* specifically 'explores the corrupting and destructive powers of industrialisation and modernity, and ultimately its consequences for the individual' (2012a, 2). The Hatter's Domain in *Madness Returns* is indeed clearly inspired by the history of the Industrial Revolution, both visually and in terms of the references to the deplorable working conditions of the time, as the game creator himself admitted (McGee, quoted in Berg 2011, 80). After her visit to the Vale of Tears, Alice enters a gigantic factory and wanders among huge machines, hot furnaces, and levers shaped like human hands and feet. The factory is a good reproduction of its equivalents in the Victorian age, when coal was mined and burned to power the machines producing, among other materials, the very iron that made up the machines themselves, their chains and assemblage (Ackroyd 2016, 275).

Some sections of Hatter Industries have atmospheric sounds, including the ominous, metallic, and hammering noises of the machines as well as the recording of the Dormouse reminding workers of what a 'Good

Worker' is. The message emitted by the speakers repeats at intervals that a good worker is 'being paid to live—and work.' Such reminders on work conduct are accompanied by posters showing the Hare's profile and the words 'All Aboard for Progress' and 'Embrace Industry Embrace Efficiency,' further establishing the equation with the 'formalized' and 'impersonal' (Pollard 1963, 258) display rules and motivational content as well as the emphasis on harsh discipline and efficiency that characterized the Industrial Revolution. From their elevated positions on two cockpits, the Hare and the Dormouse (who have literally disassembled the Hatter and taken over the factory) represent the nineteenth-century industrialists' will to supervise workers, who were all concentrated under the roof of the factory, because that made it 'easier to control and to supervise them [...] the factory represented coercion and discipline on a much larger and more organized scale [...] To enter the new sphere of unfreedom, to be introduced to a world of strict routine and discipline, to work for set hours in a set pattern, marked a profound change in status,' (Ackroyd 2016, 262). Alice's liberation of the Hatter from the factory's directors and her sabotage of the factory itself is an act of acknowledgment of (and fight against) the severe and poor working conditions of her time, an age when riots were not tolerated, offenses were severely punished, and commitment to work had to be total. Indeed, 'a strict code of discipline was generally introduced. Anyone found straying from his or her own "alley," or talking to another employee, was fined. Any worker who struck or abused an overseer immediately lost his job' (Ackroyd 2016, 263).

The negative consequences of the Industrial Revolution on the inhabitants of Wonderland are embodied by the Menacing Ruins, creatures with three child-like faces indicating their probable human origins, who rise from thickened pools of black oil, and whose bodies are made of a mass of black grime and oil. The Menacing Ruins have out-of-proportion torsos much larger than their legs, with rounded and slightly curved backs, and a singular, muscular arm. Protruding from the top of their backs are multiple pipes that release exhaust gas and flames and they attack Alice by throwing explosive flaming rocks at her that appear to be coal—the very material that marked the first stage of the Industrial Revolution and whose production increased exponentially during the nineteenth-century in the United Kingdom (Ackroyd 2016, 47). Similar to the iron workers described in Charles Dickens' 1841 novel *The Old Curiosity Shop*, the Menacing Ruins move 'like demons among the flame and the smoke, dimly and fitfully seen, flushed and tormented by the burning fires' (1890,

200). The deformity of these creatures' limbs recalls the deformations of the bodies that children working in factories often exhibited after extenuating shifts lasting up to twelve hours (Ackroyd 2016, 267).

Alice's final act of exercise of free will and assertiveness occurs at the end of the second installment of the game. During the entire narrative of *Madness Returns* she attempts to take responsibility for her alleged faults and shortcomings leading to the fire that killed her family. In order to do this, she voluntarily recalls her memories, disobeying the instructions of Dr Bumby, the once-trusted authoritative figure in charge of her case—an action that is performed literally when she recovers the icons containing the memories of her family, which are played through a voiceover as fragmented sentences belonging to her past. As Alice (and players) gradually discover through a series of flashbacks representing the resurgence of the protagonist's repressed memories (which are realized in a cartoonish style), the doctor has attempted to erase Alice's past because he is responsible for the rape of her sister and the death of her family. The fire destroying her Oxford house was necessary for him in order to cover up his actions by murdering the potential witnesses to his crime. After realizing the truth about her tragic past and the sinister machinations of the malevolent doctor (who also sells children into prostitution for personal gain), she confronts Bumby in a sequence that alternates the encounter with him in the real world (inside an underground train station) and the fight against his figure as the Dollmaker in Wonderland. In spite of the fact that Bumby is perceived as an upstanding member of society and a well-respected doctor (whereas she has a record for lunacy and hysteria), by the end of *Madness Returns* Alice takes justice into her hands and kills him by pushing him into the path of an incoming train. With this act, she saves both herself and Bumby's future victims. Alice's sanity is then completely restored, she is freed from her sense of guilt, and is now able to be fully reinstated as a valuable member of society. Her personal growth has certainly been singular, especially by being based on the power of imagination that allowed her the creation of Wonderland in both its benevolent and corrupt versions. Alice has survived the events of *Madness Returns* and has grown up by asserting her identity against all odds and by learning how to socialize in the different stages and environments of a person's life, from school and work to the interaction with other adults.

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The Immortal Hatter: Eternally Present with Alice

Amanda Rutherford and Sarah Baker

Under the pseudonym of Lewis Carroll, Charles Dodgson created arguably one of the most well-known and recognizable works in children's literature (Wahlgren 2017) with his tale of the young girl called Alice in the 1865 novel *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*. In true fairy tale form, the story takes readers on a journey of fantasy and imagination, where the impossible seems quite achievable and ordinary to people, and madness is not only normal but becomes a part of the expected narrative. In this tale, Alice meets several unusual characters, including the rather confused and seemingly disturbed Hatter. The tale of 'Alice' has stretched across decades of popular culture with adaptations and reiterations across many genres and over all forms of media. Alice herself has received substantial

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recognition by the public and the critics, yet other characters from Carroll's original tale have been somewhat neglected by comparison. Indeed, the Hatter's actions are seldom analyzed, and instead he remains a part of the periphery of the tale, a nonsensical character utilized to enhance the confusing nature and fantasy world of Wonderland. This chapter explores how the original Hatter has transgressed across platforms and genres to become a representation of what is considered the go-to depiction for narratives of clowning or craziness. His persona affords him the ability to address various issues through a sense of expected confusion and indecision, which well-places the Hatter to act as a parody for discussing contemporary concerns such as the contrast between intelligence and stupidity, acceptability versus inadequacy, or what it means to be both wise and foolish simultaneously. Through his various representations the Hatter has either become the 'other,' seen as an uncontrollable and non-conforming villain intent on the creation of havoc and evil, or as a symbol of difference who can offer insight and an alternative point of view (for a discussion on the Hatter see also Chap. 7 of the present collection).

In 1865, 'hatting' was one of the main sources of trade in Carroll's hometown of Stockport, one of the major hat-making hubs of England at the time. As such, he was well accustomed to the plight of the hatters who often ended up going a little crazy or died prematurely due to the mercury that was being used in the manufacturing process which poisoned their minds. The manufacture of the felt for hats was indeed undertaken by a process known as 'carroting,' whereby mercury nitrate in soluble form was used to strip the fur from animal skins, hence the name of 'carroting' which was the color of the solution. The matted fur was then boiled in water to shrink, and then left to evaporate. The continuous use of the solutions together with the mercury vapor produced in the drying process caused altered behaviors in hatters, as the processed felt 'continued to emit mercury vapour for some time after carroting' (Smallwood 2016). Paul Tchounwou, Wellington Ayensu, Nanuli Ninashvili, and Dwayne Sutton argue that poisoning from mercury is very potent; it is a 'toxic biohazard at room temperatures' (2003, 154). The diagnosis was termed as the 'mad hatters' syndrome' or 'hatters' shakes,' and later as 'erethism' or 'erethism mercurialis,' with symptoms such as insomnia, irritability, depression, nervousness, low self-esteem, mild tremors, and a tendency to become shy or timid in some cases. After prolonged exposure the Hatters would have experienced more severe tremors, personality disorders, delirium, increased excitability, and memory loss (Bittner et al. 1998). Carroll

was familiar with the ‘condition’ of Hatters and the depiction of such a character in his tale is well suited to resonate with the effects being seen on them.

The Victorian writer was able to capture the essence of madness in his depiction of the Hatter as he also spent much time with his own uncle, Robert Wilfred Skeffington Lutwidge, who was a member of the ‘Metropolitan Commissioners in Lunacy,’ which later became the *Lunacy Commission* (Watkin 1975). This public body served to supervise the operations and welfare of the mentally disturbed patients of the Pauper Lunatic Asylums, where hatters who had gone ‘mad’ were sent. Carroll visited the asylums and met with well-respected doctors. For example, on May 31, 1865 he wrote in his diary that he had ‘met Mr. Wilkes, one of the Lunacy doctors’ (quoted in Wakeling 2015), and becoming friends with him he received information around mental health issues. He also met the commissioner in lunacy, John Davies Cleaton, on October 19, 1883, and his longstanding friend and colleague Reginald Southey ‘became a commissioner in lunacy at the end of his medical career’ (Wakeling 2015, 282).

Carroll was in fact quite interested in the psychiatric profession and the work his uncle and his colleagues were conducting there to assist patients through a non-restraint method of care (Kohlt 2016). Part of these non-restraint programs included group activities such as plays, dancing, farming, and gardening, but also hat-making (allegedly further exposing these patients to the toxic mercury nitrate and vapors) (Kohlt 2016). Franziska Kohlt further states that another interesting group activity performed by the patients were ‘tea-parties,’ though, as these individuals belonged to the working class, the tables consisted of nothing more than a serving of bread and butter with their tea (which is in line with the illustrations made by John Tenniel for the book). We might argue that Carroll’s representation of both the Hatter and his antics is informed by his knowledge and witnessing of the real events and nature of the asylum residents. One can only imagine the events unfolding if attending one of those tea parties, and Carroll has depicted the scene meticulously for his audience in his own literary version. In *Alice’s Adventures in Wonderland*, Alice fears going to the tea party as she is concerned about being around ‘mad people.’ The Hatter and the March Hare behave erratically, switching seats, talking nonsensically, and asking unsolvable riddles. Kibel describes the event as quite difficult and confusing for Alice as she is initially denied a seat at the table and mocked for her inability to grasp real mysteries on

account of her age (1974). The Hatter and the Hare are highly irritated and impatient with her, and their irrational conduct soon drives a frustrated Alice to leave.

The continued sense of madness can be found in the Hatter's riddle of the raven and the writing desk. The relevance of this question might simply be to point out that there are endless possible views on truth, and while the answer may be one which is based on reason and logic, it could as easily be one of irrational and imagined thought. The purpose of the riddle is to reinforce the puzzling persona of its maker, suggesting that there is both truth and fallacy in all conceived responses, but also as a reflection of the confusing conversations held during the tea parties at asylums. Alice, in Carroll's tale, finds her encounter with the Hatter exasperating, and by the action of removing herself from his tea party she creates him as 'different,' alien to those people whom she considers behaving in a normal manner; he is therefore 'othered' by Alice. As Kendra Cherry suggests, 'Othering is a phenomenon in which some individuals or groups are defined and labeled as not fitting in within the norms of a social group' (2020). Being other, then, is to lack the common characteristics of the collective, and establishes 'certain groups [...] as being superior to other groups' (Zevallos *n.d.*).

This is consistent with the fact that, as Kohlt points out, 'In the Victorian age of science and empiricism, madness was felt as a threat to rationality' (2016), and, as Phyllis James states, communities were 'largely resentful or frightened of mental illness' (1999, 276). Afflicted persons were therefore cast into the asylums, 'othered,' and subjected to harsh forms of treatment in the hope of rehabilitation. The introduction of the 'non-restraint system' by Victorian psychiatrists in the pauper lunatic asylums allowed for patients to display 'normative standards of behaviour' to be eligible for reinstatement into the community (Michael 2004, 143). Carroll's Hatter can therefore pose as the mad, 'othered' individual who is trying to be reinstated. He constantly attempts, and fails, to perform in a 'normative' manner, while serving to address the fears associated with madness at that time. His erratic behavior and lunacy have enabled his adaptation into a broad range of genres, from the comical to the terrifying, and he is represented dichotomously across all age groups and forms of media as both entertainer and enemy, providing fun and amusement in some instances while representing dark narratives in others.

The 'amusing' persona of the Hatter lends to comparisons to the various court jesters from England and Europe who had thrived up until the

early 1700s. Their bold and colorful appearance, frivolous and slapstick behavior, and functionality as entertainment make these characters alike, but it is the similarity to the real or feigned fragile mental stability of the jester that bears the most resemblance. The English jester's madness, for example, made him rather humorous, performing light-hearted antics and tricks. He was the only person who could get away with questioning, mocking, and at times criticizing those in power through satire and performance during the Middle Ages (Southworth 1998). This gave the jester an advantage as he received 'a privileged haven for the practice of his eccentric skills for so long as he could keep his patron amused and retain his interest' (Southworth 1998, 8). Karen Maitland (2019) explains that, as these characters were often deformed physically, as cripples or dwarves, they provided further 'amusement' to the spectators at court with their distorted and exaggerated-in-size body-features, their questionable sanity oscillating between madness and lucidity. Professional fools of the 1700s were also educated and astute (Maitland 2019), another trait common to Carroll's Hatter, who also shows perception and talent.

The concept of the Hatter as an analogy of the jester can be seen in Norman Z. McLeod's 1933 Paramount Pictures live-action film of *Alice in Wonderland*. The film has lost some of the essence of the flightiness of the Hatter (Bye 2018), and interestingly labels him as 'mad' on the sign that directs Alice (Charlotte Henry) toward his house, where he is having tea in an outdoor courtyard in the company of the Hare. McLeod's Hatter (Edward Everett Horton) closely follows the characteristics of both the Middle Ages jesters discussed by Maitland and Carroll's original character, as he is presented with distortion through his excessively huge hat, collar, and bowtie. Regarding the language of madness, Michel Foucault (1965, 106) states that

marvelous logic of the mad which seems to mock that of the logicians because it resembles it so exactly, or rather because it is exactly the same, and because at the secret heart of madness, at the core of so many errors, so many absurdities, so many words and gestures without consequence, we discover, finally, the hidden perfection of a language [...] The ultimate language of madness is that of reason. (1965, 106)

Andrew Skull (2015) further argues this point when stating that 'the very boundaries that separate the mad from the sane are a matter of dispute' (14), remaining 'contested and controversial' (15), and this Hatter

presents both sanity and madness equally. Chris Firth argues, however, that ‘Madness, at least from the time of the enlightenment, has typically been defined as a loss of reason’ (2016, 636). The Hatter in this film (which is examined in Chap. 8 of the present collection as well) is not hysterical or distressed, and during the humorous delivery of ‘Twinkle, twinkle little bat,’ he seems focused, clear, and precise in his delivery, enjoying his performance in front of Alice. He then engages in a coherent discussion about Time, and speaking with purpose he mirrors the knowledgeable, yet amusing jesters discussed by Karen Maitland (2019) from the Middle Ages. The defining feature of the Middle Ages jester, according to Chris Littlechild (2019), was that the character would clown around and humiliate himself, embodying stupid-ness to amuse his audiences. On the other hand, jesters ‘were often highly intelligent, savvy entertainers,’ much like McLeod’s 1933 Hatter, who embodies both silliness and sanity, juxtaposing both stupidity and intelligence. Thus, as a representation of the jester, the Hatter portrays madness through the elements of the fool-character.¹

In pantomime, the first Hatter (Sidney Harcourt) appears in the 1886 *Alice in Wonderland* musical by Henry Savile Clarke, donning the familiar oversized hat and bowtie. In his review of the performance, Carroll stated that Harcourt’s portrayal of the Hatter was

a weird and uncanny thing, as though some grotesque monster, seen last night in a dream, should walk into the room in broad daylight, and quietly say ‘good morning!’ I need not try to describe what I meant Hatter to be, since, so far as I can now remember, it was exactly what Mr. Harcourt has made him [...] the Hatter surprised me most. (182–83)

Carroll’s review surprisingly describes the Hatter as a monster, the perfect image of the character he had created, yet he is warmly received by the

¹William Shakespeare (1623), arguably the greatest poet and playwright who ever lived, often made use of fools and jesters in his works, representing these characters as highly respectable, intelligent, and crucial to the court (Littlechild 2019). Exemplary is *King Lear* (1605), whose Fool is clever and intelligent, close to the king, and permitted to speak the truth directly, even when the monarch would prefer not to hear it (Rasmussen and DeJong 2016). Lear’s Fool plays the role of protector, advocate, commentator, and moderator to the king and gives advice that others would not dare to speak aloud. He often sounds cruel and is full of criticism, and, although he is threatened by Lear with whippings and punishment, this never happens, and instead the king admits his mistakes and learns valuable lessons from him.

audiences, who find pity and humor in his antics. ‘Given that madness reduced people to the level of beasts,’ as Firth suggests, Carroll’s Hatter, as a non-human, aligns well with these thoughts surrounding his condition at that time, ‘no different from other animals’ (2016, 636). Interestingly, Clarke had managed to capture the ‘madness’ of an insane Hatter, while also embracing the tropes of historical jesters. The review ‘Alice In Wonderland’ (printed on December 23, 1886 by *The Scotsman*), stated that ‘We witness with much hilarity “the mad tea party,” with the dormouse, the hatter, and the march hare, the entertainment winding up with an amusing song [...] “Alice in Wonderland” not only won success but deserved it’ (6). Similarly, *The Daily Telegraph and Courier* (on December 24, 1886) applauded the performance, writing ‘Yesterday afternoon big children and little children did nothing but laugh. It was wonderful how they roared in sympathy with the Hatter, albeit he declared himself mad [...] Mr. Sydney Harcourt, maddest of Hatters’ (2). This pantomime had successfully captured the heart of its author, reviewers, and audiences alike, and set the bar for future performances.

This theatrical production of the novel was the source of inspiration for ten West End revivals until 1927 and for ‘numerous films, theatrical performances, and ballets as well as countless works of scholarly analysis’ (Bauer and Lowne 2020). Exemplary is the successful 2011 Royal Ballet production of *Alice’s Adventures in Wonderland* by Christopher Wheeldon at the Royal Opera House, which presents the Hatter (Steven McRae) as a wide-eyed and pointy-nosed character who is both irritable and whimsical, and who tap-dances across the tea-table creating a stark contrast to ballet conventions. On the music scene, the character is also present in Melanie Martinez’s 2017 *Mad Hatter*, which depicts an Alice who ‘goes mad’ after ingesting drugs and portrays the Hatter as ‘high’ and therefore crazy. The female protagonist sings how much she prefers people who are in this state to the ‘normals,’ which serves to address her own inability to interact with others or relax without smoking weed or watching cartoons (Rosenzweig 2016). Larkin Poe’s 2013 *Mad as a Hatter*, in contrast, is a presentation of madness as a mental health problem that so many suffer from, and the fear surrounding those diseases that alter a person’s state of being into irrationality. As these examples demonstrate, the Hatters’ mad persona of craziness is recognized within popular culture and continues to present itself across all platforms and genres.

On the other hand, the figure of the Hatter can also be likened to that of a clown. The first clowns ‘did not emerge as a professional comic actor

until the late Middle Ages, when traveling entertainers sought to imitate the antics of the court jesters and the amateur fool societies' (*Britannica* 2020). Clowns provide a source of laughter and enjoyment in circuses, in pantomime, or at children's parties, and are recognizable by their distinctive makeup, bold costumes, ludicrous antics, and buffoonery. They are similar to the Hatter's through their erratic, crazy behavior, riddles, and disheveled comedic attire, providing amusement at their own expense. The Hatter's clownish behavior has been widely reproduced in popular culture, especially through the adaptations belonging to the prolific Disney franchise, which has established itself as the contemporary 'owner' of many of the old stories told. Disney tales, indeed, as Marina Warner argues, have staying power because of the meanings they generate and the way in which they are presented (1995). The Disney animated film *Alice in Wonderland* (Geronimi et al. 1951), in particular, shows the Hatter donned in bold lime and green colors, with blue bowtie, a gigantic hat, and unruly white hair. The Hatter in the film is a loud, peculiar, and an overtly performative clown-like character, who is seemingly content within his 'madness,' as he dances and sings with his friends. There is, however, some semblance to Carroll's Hatter in that Alice (voiced by Kathryn Beaumont) in the 1951 film too 'others' him. The young protagonist also shows a distaste toward mad people and does not want to associate with him, but, since she has no other option, she joins him for tea. The Hatter does not initially welcome Alice as she sits at the table despite his protests and angry gestures, but once she joins in their song the animosity is gone and the party soon becomes a celebration of her own un-birthday with her new crazy friends.

In Disney's *Alice in Wonderland* (2010) the Hatter is known as Tarrant Hightop (Johnny Depp). His physical appearance in this live-action film is more clownish than before, with a large amount of make-up used to create his white faced, pink, and blue eyeshadowed face complete with lipstick, mascara, and rouge, and big, round, almost luminous eyes. Although Disney encapsulates the modern clown vision in this character, once again a part of the historical Hatter is present. In contemporary culture looking pale or 'white' is indeed often associated with being unwell, and the Hatter's bright orange unruly hair and eyebrows (as well as plastered and partially stained fingernails) in this film can be seen as a clever reminder of his character's origin and roots, orange being the color of the toxic mercury solution that was used to prepare fur for making hats in Carroll's time. Tim Burton's (2010) Hatter might therefore be suffering from the

effects of mercury poisoning. According to actor Johnny Depp, he is ‘made up of different people and their extreme sides’ (The Hatter 2019), a person with a multiple personality disorder, deeply unstable, and confused. When he is brought before the Red Queen (Helena Bonham Carter), for instance, and asked about the whereabouts of Alice (who is sitting beside the monarch at the throne), the Hatter replies that he has ‘been considering things that begin with the letter M [...] moron, mutiny, murder, malice.’ He has noticed Alice but will not expose her, showing his loyalty; he rather uses all the M words that describe the queen (under the guise of madness) and as the latter appears to take issue with his response, he rambles off to her about the size of her head, again insulting her, finally offering to make her a hat. The tyrannical monarch is immediately swayed in judgment and has his chains removed. The Hatter shows that he possesses rational thought and is quick thinking and intelligent: he uses his label of craziness to defend himself by acting mad. The 2010 Hatter is also emotional, far from the true ‘monster’ character described by Carroll in 1886; as Depp describes him, ‘You see instantly what he’s feeling [...] like a mood ring his emotions are very, very close to the surface’ (2010).

Earlier on in the film, the Hatter recognizes Alice (Mia Wasikowska) immediately as she arrives at the tea party, and is overjoyed to see her, even though the other characters are convinced that she is the wrong Alice. He has more intelligence and depth than his surface madness, using his words, riddles, and actions to purposefully confuse his enemies. He has knowledge of what the future holds and informs Alice of her upcoming ordeal with the Red Queen and the Jabberwocky. Tarrant Hightop thus becomes a mentor to the protagonist, reminding her in a moment of discouragement that she ‘used to be much more, muchier’ and pushing her to challenge herself and have faith. He refuses to permit her to shun away from her responsibilities—she needs to be Alice, ‘The Alice’ who is brave and courageous, who can fight for what is good and right, and slay the Jabberwocky. The 2010 Hatter may appear clownish, nonsensical, and indeed mad, or jester-like in his intelligent word-play performance to the Red Queen, but it is his loyalty, persistence, and ability to plan for Alice’s victory that tells us that a new, more complex Hatter has emerged.

In other modern-day examples, the Hatter takes on the ‘monster’ aspect of Carroll’s 1886 description, to become a terrifying character of the science fiction and horror genres, his madness being wild, violent, and out of control. One such Hatter is found within the DC comics and Batman franchises, which, as Antonio Sanna argues (2015), presents

several tropes of Gothic horror through their creation of fear, and the return of haunting and terrifying past traumas (see also Chap. 7 in this book). In the Batman comics such themes are linked to the character of Jervis Tetch, a brilliant but insane neuroscientist who is obsessed, and identifies with Carroll's Mad Hatter. In his state of mental illness, Tetch uses his hypnotic mastery skill to take control of the minds of others to do his will. This is indeed typical of Gothic horror, which places an emphasis on the struggle between society and the individual who is mad (Sanna 2015). Jervis was alienated as a child, resulting in his compromised mental state. He is thus likened to the Hatter, not merely in appearance, but also through his craziness, which eventuates in his incarceration. In the *Batman* #49 (1948) comic, as Brandon Mulholand argues (2018), Jervis uses chaos to serve his own end: he gains pleasure by removing Batman's happiness, rendering havoc, and mortally wounding Catwoman with a shot to the stomach. Such irrational and immoral practices are well established tropes of Gothic horror (Botting 1996) and place Jarvis as the 'Mad Hatter,' an evil villain and enemy of Batman. Embracing madness enables an individual to attain a sense of ultimate personal freedom, finding a realm to reside in which he/she is better than reality (Bruce 2019). The Hatter in the Batman franchise has reached the point 'where neither thought nor being feel apparent anymore' (Bruce 2019, 17) and he engages in the world of crime, torture, and murder.

As a character born through Carroll's witnessing of the insane in Victorian asylums, it is fitting to find another iteration of the Hatter as an asylum resident. In the video game *American McGee's Alice* (2000) he is again seen as a monstrous individual, filled with madness and evil. The monster is that which embodies 'mystery and menace' (Cohen 1970, 1), and is 'dangerous and horrible' (Gilmore 2009, 1), and this Hatter represents Karen E. Macfarlane's conceptualization of the monster who is such 'only [...] as the result of a traumatic history' (2012, 114). Indeed, the Hatter's monstrosity is due to his years of incarceration, and his long-term witnessing of atrocities and torture performed behind the asylum walls. The Hatter in this game is an insidious villain, a vicious murderer with a deeply twisted mind, whose monstrous actions, as Margrit Shildrick argues (2000), fall outside of the standard rules of normal acceptable behavior, and, as such, become a challenge to societal norms and values. Within the game he conducts sadistic experiments on the animals and creatures of Wonderland and holds the March Hare and Dormouse as his tortured, limb-missing captives. The character of the Hatter in *American McGee's*

Alice thus embodies the function of monsters that create peril and raise tensions in the narrative, and the terror which they invoke for the characters and audience alike places their existence in an essentially Gothic mode (Heiland 2008) (confront with the discussion of the videogame in Chap. 17). We can therefore agree with Susan Bye's argument that the original text from Carroll has been turned into a nightmare, where the character has been transformed into a representation of horror and the grotesque (2018).

Within the science fiction genre, the 2009 *Alice* television mini-series on the Syfy channel portrays the Hatter (Andrew-Lee Potts) as a forward-thinking, fashionable, and considerate character, who runs a teashop and sells human emotions. He is a member of the resistance against the Queen of Hearts' (Kathy Bates) leadership, can hold a coherent conversation, and is considered suave, and worldly-wise (Greenhill and Kohm 2016). The depiction of madness rests not in the hands of this Hatter, but rather with the queen who controls by sedation the minds of the human 'Oysters' to siphon their feelings. These 'oysters' remain in their constant drug-like state, and act as a powerful reminder of Carroll's experiences at the Victorian asylums, as 'the only way to maintain control in the increasingly overcrowded and poorly staffed county asylums was to resort to restraints, padded cells and sedatives' ('A Victorian Mental Asylum' 2018).

In this television mini-series, the Hatter provides a bottle of 'excitement' tea as payment to the homeless man who has delivered Alice (Caterina Scorsone) to him. The Hatter advises the man that he must not 'take it on an empty stomach, and only one tiny drop at a time, otherwise the experience might burst your shriveled up little heart.' The tea is the drug that in this case brings excitement to the drinker, but it comes with side effects much like conventional medicine, and later viewers find that there are 'teas' to provide every different human emotion. In addition, the Caterpillar (Harry Dean Stanton) tells Alice that if 'you mix the wrong feelings together' you will 'end up with a complete breakdown,' which rings true for modern medicine and the debilitating effects of misdiagnosis or over-treating patients. Peter Breggin discusses the misuse of drugs and concludes that there are several categories of psychiatric drugs which can become extremely dangerous if not correctly administered and that this can result in horrendous reactions, including anger, rage, and violent psychotic behavior (2009). As such, to consume too much of any one tea, or too many varieties at once, will bring harm to the user via a total mental breakdown. In effect, the user goes 'crazy' and as such he/she may display

unusual symptoms and actions, depicting the effects of overdosing. Even the ‘oysters’ are in a constant induced trance, unable to speak until their drugs wear off.

The beloved Hatter in Carroll’s tale of Alice has been rendered immortal through the continuous re-production and re-adaptation of his character over a period of one hundred and fifty-seven years. The selected media used in this discussion use examples of the Hatter across literature, pantomime, comics, film, television, and videogames, to provide a brief overview of some of the various iterations of the Hatter across the multiple media and over the multiple genres in which he is found. There is, of course, a seemingly endless supply of examples for future examination. This chapter has shown how malleable the Hatter has become: he portrays varying degrees of madness in every performance, including occasions where he uses his title of madness to advantage himself more so than being innately crazy. He is, however, a highly intelligent character, with similarities that can be drawn to jesters of the Middle Ages, irrespective of whether he is using his abilities to do good or bad, and he is effective under pressure. The Hatter serves us well by providing insight into the past and teaches us lessons through his varying depictions of madness.

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As Above So Below? Madness and Nonsense in *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*

Emily Scherzinger and Jeffery Donaldson

Lewis Carroll's *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* has generated multiple analyses. While many of these considerations attempt to 'make sense' of the text, others endeavor to delineate concepts of nonsense without granting the phenomenon an objective definition. One of these concepts is madness, positioned adjacent to nonsense in Western societal conceptualizations of the two phenomena owing to the entrenched assumption that some nonsense is an expression of madness; however, regarding nonsense as the mother tongue of madness ignores not only the diverse ways that nonsense functions contiguously with madness as a destructive/productive element alongside sense, but also the dynamic co-existent relationship that blossoms when nonsense and madness are put into conversation. Theoretical work on the relation between these two phenomena is not extensive. As a result, we can actualize the connection between them within the context of Western hegemonic society through a reading of *Alice's Adventures*. Inquiries into this text that serve as the foundation of nonsense theory tend toward reifying Western hermeneutic processes that

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legitimate meaning via institutional logics that perpetuate inequality. We suggest, therefore, that positioning madness as merely an effect of extreme nonsense, or an excessive display of nonsense, is a disservice to readings of *Alice's Adventures*, and non-normative interpretive strategies in general. These latent assumptions about nonsense and madness haunt current gaps in the theoretical field of nonsense, as well as hermeneutics more broadly; many of the lacunae in nonsense theory are forged by the omission or subjugation of madness from analyses of the challenges to meaning that nonsense whips into frenzy. Aside from underestimating the potential of madness as a non-normative experience of meaning-making, in ignoring the productive relationship between madness and nonsense we also disregard the affectual and societal ripples that these phenomena influence when circulating in society together. Keeping in mind this positioning of these phenomena, this chapter suggests that nonsense and madness are not voids of meaninglessness and nothingness. Instead, nonsense functions as one of the infinite multifaceted logics of madness. Through articulation, it works to free madness by undermining oppressive boundaries of fixed identities and binaries as well as objective meaning. Madness, and therefore theoretical work on this concept, as suggested in Michel Foucault's *History of Madness* (1961), are a recent development. Our contemporary Western perception of madness is founded upon a historical and categorical separation of madness and reason, a slow development that consequently divorced meaning from madness through pathologization, feminization, and abjection. *Alice's Adventures* brings nonsense and madness together and consequently 'critiqu[es] and transcend[s] [...] psychocentred [(i.e., objective, scientific, reasonable)] ways of thinking, behaving, relating, and being' (Menzies et al. 2013, 13). Together these phenomena work to criticize Western philosophical assumptions of universality, reasonability, and binary logics that are often the foundations of theories on nonsense. Rather than reframing the hegemonically abject concepts of madness and nonsense as valuable and important ontologies and hermeneutics, nonsense theorists tend to erase or omit the mad qualities of nonsense, instead choosing to 'make sense' of it by deploying dualist logics. For example, nonsense theorist Hugh Haughton, in his introduction to the Penguin Centenary Edition of *Alice's Adventures* (1998), picks the text apart, diverting responsibility for the hermeneutic and political implications of his reading to the belief that 'introductions tend to mean explanations' (1998, ix). Haughton begins his introduction with the suggestion that the text's nonsense functions in response to many

of the societal changes at the time of Carroll's writing: 'Alice is confronted by grave travesties of most of the institutions which govern her and her author's life—the monarch, the rule of law, education, grammar and social etiquette,' as evidenced in the trial over which the Queen of Hearts presides (1998, xlv). More broadly, the nonsense in *Alice's Adventures* 'thrives on travesty[ing] [the] authority' of Western society's most foundational institutions, which have come to represent the apex of rationality. This reading is readily available and arguably undeniable, but the rest of Haughton's analysis then continues to suggest that 'we could classify readers of the books as either Gryphons or Queens' (1998, xi).

Here, we argue, is the rub: attempts to apply binaric logics to nonsensical texts structures nonsense and sense into singularities, individual apolitical elements that produce meaning and significance, which are in turn also constrained by a binary opposition. Haughton demonstrates an awareness of 'the problem of meaning' that 'haunts the text and its heroine,' as well as 'its readers,' but, like Alice, attempts to employ methods of interpretation that are counteractive to revealing the dynamic relationship between the nonsense and madness of the text, such as categorization, structuralization, binaric formulations, and an expected stability of meaning (1998, xi). To engage in this structural reading of nonsense 'may preserve the coherence of the reading' but closes off the text's infinite potentiality (Lecerle 1994, 22). It is important to note that Haughton acknowledges the text's 'absurd and riddling parables of narrative and linguistic innocence, but [these devices] are also allegories of experience: incarnations of philosophical sophistication and perverse intellectual wit' (1998, xii); however, his hermeneutic practices imply a prioritization of the signification of concepts over the manifestation of a subject, which ultimately constrains meaning and nonsense within a dualist logic that works to repress madness.

This chapter analyzes theoretical responses to sense and nonsense within *Alice's Adventures*. To do so, we compare and contrast the works of Jean-Jacques Lecerle and Elisabeth Sewell, two foundational theorists of nonsense; and Gilles Deleuze's *The Logic of Sense* (1990). The former theorists, this chapter notes, perceive nonsense and sense as beholden to a binaric logic both conceptually and dynamically. In comparison, Deleuze attempts to free these phenomena from their constraints to proliferate meaning outside of binaries by introducing madness and its disruptive nature into his analysis. Ultimately, we argue that the structuring of nonsense and sense as diametrically opposed reduces and simplifies these two

elements into singularities functioning to reinforce Western hegemonic processes of meaning-making.

‘[T]he genre’ of nonsense, as Jean-Jacques Lecercle suggests in his foundational text, is ‘structured by [a] contradiction, which [he] eventually formulate[s] in terms of a dialectic, between over-structuring and de-structuring, subversion and support’ (1994, 3). Like Haughton, Lecercle uses a philosophical reading of *Alice’s Adventures* to set up nonsense as an element ‘structured’ and defined by its contradictory nature. Lecercle argues that nonsense, as a genre,

is a by-product of the development of the institution of the school, that the texts provide an imaginary solution to the real contradiction between the urge to capture an ever wider proportion of the population for the purpose of elementary schooling, and the resistance [...] that such a cultural upheaval inevitably arouses. (1994, 4)

In this characterization, Lecercle implies that literary nonsense is produced as a direct result of tensions between ‘free[dom] and constrain[t]’ that derive from the institutionalization of ‘common sense’ (1994, 25; 4). Lecercle’s text, then, hermeneutically functions through a logic of ‘compensation,’ or ‘excess and lack’ (1994, 115; 3). For example, in his detailing of the infamous raven riddle at the Mad Tea-Party, Lecercle believes that both Carroll and the Mad Hatter ‘mean [...] not to mean,’ leading to a cognitive impetus in the reader to ‘produce the absent meaning’ (1994, 119). The lack of recognizable meaning ‘offered by the author of the text’ leads to a stronger ‘need and desire for full meaning’ in the reader (Lecercle 1994, 115). This logic imposes on nonsense a binary, in which the ‘excess and lack’ of sense producing nonsense determines its ability to relay meaning, and, in so doing, forecloses on alternative logics of nonsense that hermeneutic projects can take up. An interesting example occurs when Lecercle argues that ‘there is something comforting [...] in Carroll’s provocative trick,’ referring to the raven riddle (1994, 119); the riddle is ‘comforting’ and ‘safe,’ so long as ‘there is something meant beneath this apparent piece of nonsense’ (1994, 119). In other words, there must be some recognizable meaning underneath the nonsense; however, ‘the Hatter, being mad, may not be in control,’ which Lecercle terms ‘the ultimate non-sense of madness, which literary nonsense attempts to deny’ (1994, 119; 120). Lecercle equates madness with lack: an inability to produce meaning, and an unbearable lack of sense. The removal of madness

from the conversation about literary nonsense is necessary to preserve nonsense as a genre and a hermeneutic strategy with a clear, comforting logic. In this way, Lecercle eliminates what madness induces: a disruption to the established binary, apparently required to access nonsense, and the ability of madness and nonsense to multiply meaning.

Similarly, Elisabeth Sewell, another canonical theorist of nonsense, whose text, *The Field of Nonsense* (2015), follows Lecercle's logic in structuralizing nonsense into a binary but does so within the context of games and play in her reading of *Alice's Adventures*. Sewell follows Lecercle's argument that nonsense manifests as a 'contradiction, [...] the breaking of the rules of the game' (Sewell 2015, 2). She takes a different cognitive turn in this analysis of nonsense, however, noting that this element is often considered in relation to 'collections of words': 'language is one of the mind's principal instruments for making sense of things and events' (Sewell 2015, 3). In order to prove this point, Sewell sets up a dialectic of order/disorder 'in the mind' as 'the defining characteristic of the game of Nonsense' (2015, 46). Within this binary, disorder functions on two levels. Sewell notes that 'disorder' is used to 'mean [...] madness,' and, to a lesser yet 'necessary degree,' incongruity (2015, 40–41; 69). The former configuration of disorder is a kind of ultimate disorder 'typical not only of magic, but of dream as well, with its extension into nightmare and *delusion*,' which 'would disrupt Nonsense because it allows the notions of substitutions and co-existences' (Sewell 2015, 40). The latter form of disorder within which Sewell understands nonsense and its functions 'is not disorder so much as a condition necessary for the playing of a game' (2015, 40–41). The literary nonsense that Sewell outlines within her dialectic, then, falls closer to a recognizable and sensical logic than madness, nightmare, and their capacious grammars; there is a slight bend to nonsense, but not enough for nonsense to fall into 'lunacy' (2015, 69):

[W]hen we turn to nightmare and try to formulate the nature of the mind's operation under the influence of disorder, we are at once in difficulties, for we have no proper instrument for this side of the investigation. Nightmare, and to a lesser extent dream, are the opposite of logic, but the mind can only think logically if it is to think consciously and rationally at all. (Sewell 2015, 49)

Here, logic is configured as a tool of the 'consciou[s] and rationa[l]' mind, which is thus prioritized; if the mind is 'under the influence of disorder,' by her definition it cannot think consciously or rationally, and therefore

cannot deploy nonsense (Sewell 2015, 49). Madness is thus framed as an object, pathologized element in the assumption of order and disorder as mutually exclusive concepts in nonsense. Sewell thus ensures that madness, or, in other terms, ‘the force towards disorder in the mind’ is ‘inhibited’ from disrupting her theorizations (2015, 56). Like Lecercle’s dialectic of excess/lack of sense, Sewell’s argument that nonsense follows a dualist logic of order and disorder represses madness to prioritize cognitive order and reasonability. Sewell draws upon Carroll’s use of serial order to prove this point. She suggests, ‘Nonsense employs series’ in a way that ‘preserv[es] the conditions necessary for serial order [...] and an arrangement turning upon some form of “before” and “after”’ (2015, 81). The purpose of serial order is to offer ‘the mind that sense of security and of being in control’ even when words are bent slightly out of meaningful shape (Sewell 2015, 70). Sewell thus constructs a dualist logic around nonsense that devalues madness as a magical, disruptive element while ‘carefully limit[ing]’ its prescribed role, and allows for deployment of nonsense in safe and controlled ways (Sewell 2015, 81).

What happens when we value madness in this conversation, or push it farther into the foreground? What occurs when we abandon a dualist logic from which to structuralize nonsense? To this, Gilles Deleuze responds in his seminal text on the subject, *The Logic of Sense*, asserting that it is inherently problematic to assume a binaric logic to limit nonsense and sense ‘into singulars and individuals’ (1990, 81). In fact, Deleuze believes that the infinite nature of nonsense is a logic that functions co-extensively with madness and prevents the structuralization of nonsense and sense into singularities. In comparison to the aforementioned nonsense theorists, Deleuze does not construct the logic of his argument upon dualism. Rather, he suggests that nonsense, sense, and madness all exist together in a state of constant flows:

When we assume that nonsense says its own sense, we wish to indicate [...] that sense and nonsense have a specific relation which cannot copy that of true and false, that is, which can not be conceived simply on the basis of a relation of exclusion. [...] [W]hat would be the purpose of rising from the domain of truth to the domain of sense, if it were only to find between sense and nonsense a relation analogous to that of the true and the false? [...] The logic of sense is necessarily determined to posit between sense and nonsense an original type of intrinsic relation, a mode of co-presence. (1990, 68)

Although there may be different figures of nonsense, there is no exclusionary opposition between and among them. More specifically, Deleuze suggests that the first series of nonsense is incorporated into systems of signification as the ‘empty square circulat[ing] [...] to produce sense’ (1990, 73). In this characterization, nonsense sits ‘at the surface’ of language, and interpellates ‘schizoid fragments’ into hermeneutic structures ‘to organize and display [these] elements which have risen from the depth’ (Deleuze 1990, 92). This conceptualization of nonsense and madness as productive and available for usage is featured in most popular manifestations of the phenomenon, as found in *Alice’s Adventures*. Here, nonsense and madness function simultaneously within and through a playful relation with sense. Deleuze then characterizes the second series of nonsense as an initially insignificant ‘threat’ of a ‘formless, fathomless nonsense’ which, when approached, ‘overturn[s]’ the ‘organization of the surface’ for a ‘terrible, primordial order’ (1990, 82). This series is where Deleuze locates ‘a *language in depth*’ that is ‘carved into [...] bodies’ (1990, 84). Unlike the ‘always mobile nonsense’ and its ‘harmless schizoid fragments’ that work to ‘distribut[e] sense’ along the surface of language, the second series of nonsense disrupts the surface organization (Deleuze 1990, 86). Shoshana Felman’s analysis (1997) of prologue poems as haunting and paradoxical offers a line of inquiry similar to Deleuze’s consideration of nonsense. The use of the frame poem in *Alice’s Adventures* can arguably constitute a nonsensical logic in a mad reading-project, disturbing the popularized theoretical dialectics used to comprehend and harness nonsense. Exploring the ramifications of the prologue poem on the rest of the text’s nonsensical and mad elements is a method of reading that ‘lets language speak’ by refusing ‘fixed and unique meaning or interpretation, but a proliferation of variously ambiguous partial structures’ (Lecercle 1994, 24).

The prologue to *Alice’s Adventures* is a poem commonly referred to as ‘All in the golden afternoon’ that functions as a ‘narrative frame’ of disruption in ways similar to the prologue of Henry James’ 1898 ‘The Turn of the Screw’ (Felman 1997, 123). This poem is widely assumed to depict the origin of *Alice’s Adventures* as Carroll and the Liddell children form ‘the tale of Wonderland’ together (Carroll 1998, 6). The creative cooperation between the narrator and the children is noteworthy, but there are moments throughout the poem that indicate its function as more than an outline of the story’s origin. Felman notes that the prologue of ‘The Turn of the Screw’ features an unknown narrator recounting the governess’s

infamous story at a campfire, effectively ‘fram[ing] the story not only spatially but also temporally: while it takes place long *after* the governess’s story, it also tells of events which had occurred *before* it’ (1997, 120). The prologue poem to *Alice’s Adventures* demonstrates a similar toying with temporality that hints toward the narrative’s nonsensical logic and mad qualities. In particular, the poem simultaneously occurs after and before the story of Alice: the narrator re-tells the events of the afternoon *after* ‘the tale is done’ and the ‘merry crew’ has ‘steer[ed]’ home, and the poem is notably placed spatially within the book *before* the reader launches into the literal story of *Alice’s Adventures* (Carroll 1998, 6). In these ways, the existence of *Alice’s Adventures* is literally and actually always due to an ‘echoing effect’ (Felman 1997, 121); the narrative is always already an echo of the story told on that ‘golden afternoon,’ and thus the origin of the story ‘constitutes its infinite deferral’ (Carroll 1998, 5; Felman 1997, 122). This frame, then, works to ‘problematiz[e] [...] the relationship itself between the inside and the outside of the textual space’ (Felman 1997, 123). In other words, the prologue poem disrupts the traditional binaric framing of the interior/exterior of a narrative, instead opening the text up so that the exterior of the story is included and informs the interior of the story. Indeed, the story’s exterior leaks into the interior nonsensical elements and mad subjectivities, and thus the prologue works to establish a textual environment that allows nonsense and madness to manifest outside of definition and stabilization, once again.

The frame blurs the line between text and reality, sense and nonsense, and meaning and meaninglessness in order to draw focus to the ‘reader-effect,’ defined by Felman as ‘simultaneously trying to make sense of [the story] and *undergoing* the story’ (1997, 124). The reader-effect that *Alice’s Adventures* induces is a notable dynamic indicative of a broader statement that nonsense and madness are meaningful, as evidenced in Alice’s interaction with the Cheshire Cat. Namely, as Alice attempts to ascertain information from the cat’s incoherent directions, it both self-negates and self-affirms in a paradoxical event of ‘becoming-unlimited’ (Deleuze 1990, 9), which leads Alice to state

‘I wish you wouldn’t keep appearing and vanishing so suddenly: you make one quite giddy!’

‘All right,’ said the Cat; and this time it vanished quite slowly, beginning with the end of the tail, and ending with the grin, which remained some time after the rest of it had gone. (Carroll 1998, 59)

This microcosmic example of the dynamic that is instigated via the frame poem clearly depicts a leakage between the otherwise mutually exclusive concepts of presence and absence. The Cheshire Cat is a remarkable character beyond its iconic floating grin, as its consistent dis/re-appearance affirms its existence as something that was able to disappear in the first place; the cat's absence simultaneously affirms its presence. Here, the cat demonstrates its habitation of the surface of language as '[t]he infinitely divisible event,' which 'is always *both at once*. It is eternally that which has just happened and that which is about to happen [...]. [I]t is *neither the one nor the other*, but rather their common result' (Deleuze 1990, 8). The event of the cat disappearing and reappearing 'is coextensive with becoming' both present and absent via an infinite logic of nonsense, whereas 'becoming is itself coextensive with language' (Deleuze 1990, 8). Deleuze offers 'the event [a]s sense itself,' produced along the surface of language via the 'empty square' of nonsense as a 'surface effect, [...] a product which spreads out over, or extends itself the length of, the surface; it is strictly co-present to, and coextensive with its own cause' (1990, 70). Indeed, the Cheshire Cat employs words, directions, and a constantly and dynamically occurring state of being that 'sa[y] [their] own sense and is, for this reason, nonsense' (Deleuze 1990, 67)—not because, as Lecercle and Sewell suggest, there is a binaric relation of exclusion predicated upon hermeneutic practices of rationality and consciousness.

Western hegemonic society has a significant investment in binaries of all kinds, and the field of hermeneutics is no exception. As Felman argues, engaging in hermeneutic strategies of sense-making and sense-control is 'a political project' that aims to 'tak[e] over [...] the very power implied by meaning' (1997, 170). Extending Felman's brief, one-sentence gesture toward sense-making, it is clear that hermeneutic practices are highly politicized: sense-making is an ideological process that works to limit meaning's potentiality within a binaric logic predicated upon exclusion, often for the benefit of a specific population and the detriment of another. The stakes of nonsense as an unrealized avenue of alternative, mad readings and logics of meaning-making are clear: in nonsense texts, hegemonically abject concepts such as madness are re-presented as valuable ways of being and interpreting with their own logics. These texts contain a 'power of intuition [...] in their madness, to the same extent as there is madness in their method' (Lecercle 1994, 6). Rather than, as Haughton argues, Alice's Western epistemological systems and consequent hermeneutical strategies 'giving her a paradoxical intellectual authority' within the text,

we believe that *Alice's Adventures* actually works to negate any 'intellectual authority' in favor of a cacophonous array of readings that prioritize and manifest nonsensical logics and mad manifestations of strange characters.

To engage in a reading-project of *Alice's Adventures* that uses a dualist logic of nonsense/meaning ultimately works to reify Western hegemonic processes of meaning-making that exclude madness in order to construct the 'twisted braid of affects and thoughts' that defines Western conceptualizations of these phenomena (Kristeva 1982, 1). Generally, binaries offer an opportunity for 'radical exclu[sion]' of dangerous properties from the safety of fixed entities, an 'eject[ion] beyond the scope of the possible, the tolerable, the thinkable' into 'the place where meaning collapses' (Kristeva 1982, 2; 1; 2). It is in this space of imploded meaning at the bottom of the rabbit hole that Western society has relegated abject madness and nonsense. Like our Mad Hatter, the nonsensical madman in Foucault's theory is 'expelled to a different realm, where the danger he presents is disarmed. Doubly so, in that what he now represents is *the difference from the Other in the exteriority of others*' (Foucault 2009, 181). This representation of the 'ultimate' exterior Other, writes Kristeva, speaks to some of Western society's worst fears, such as voids, isolation, disease, and death:

Not me. Not that. But not nothing, either. A 'something' that I do not recognize as a thing. A weight of meaninglessness, about which there is nothing insignificant [...]. On the edge of non-existence and hallucination, of a reality that, if I acknowledge it, annihilates me. (1982, 1)

Nonsense and its relations to madness '*distur[b]* identity, system, order,' and '[do] not respect borders, positions, rules' (Kristeva 1982, 4). In comparison, normative Western hermeneutic processes are predicated upon 'a myth of objectivization' (Priest 2013, 197). Therefore, in order to produce binaries of signification, such as truth and falsity, madness must be 'permanently thrust aside,' or otherwise the obliteration of ideologically powerful societal structures, such as 'the gaze of reason,' are at risk (Kristeva 1982, 3; Foucault 2009, 181). Despite these attempts at suppression and erasure, madness as an abject entity is simultaneously present and absent within the self. Kristeva notes, 'I spit *myself* out, I abject *myself* within the same motion through which "I" claim to establish *myself*' (1982, 3). Akin to the dynamic presences and absences of the Cheshire Cat, there is always a 'shady' madness drifting within articulations of

nonsense that illuminates the fragile cracks in our hermeneutic structures (Kristeva 1982, 4).

The early discursive ascriptions of disease and infection to poetry and language demonstrate how the medicalization of madness seemed like a 'reason/able' next step in their conceptualizations. Psychiatry was and still is one of the structures that perpetuated fearful responses to nonsense and madness and thus affectually braided these two separate phenomena together to produce many iterations of an essentialist figure of abject non-sensical madness. Before the medicalization of madness, there was disagreement over what exactly to *do* with mad people; they were not necessarily violent, but were considered dangerous and produced dis/ease in conservative societies because of their sometimes 'immoral' displays of radical subjectivity. Living a life of divine exile, mad people were not considered to be part of 'a population with whom they were believed to have something in common' until the Renaissance, and were from then on condemned to prisons, asylums, and institutions (Foucault 2009, 72) (for a discussion of madness in the Victorian age, see also Chap. 10 of the present collection). '[M]adness was officially annexed to the realms of medical practice' in the late eighteenth century, and the medical gaze categorically proliferated not only notions of nonsense as symptomatic of madness, but also general fear of and disgust toward madness as a condition or manifestation of the ultimate Other (Foucault 2009, 306).

Hysteria, the mad women's expression, as well as madness more broadly, can thus both be perceived as embodied articulations of potentiality. This potentiality is never fully realized due to the affectual economy that circulates signs of madness as fearful, deviant, and ill/ogical. The medicalization of madness has proliferated into public consciousness to affectually braid madness and nonsense into a concomitant relationship under the gaze of reason held by Western society. In 'Affective Economies' (2004), Sarah Ahmed metaphorically extends Marxist economic 'logic' in which 'the more [signs] circulate, the more affective they become, and the more they appear to "contain" affect' (2004, 120). This poststructuralist consideration of affect perceives emotions as 'not contained within the contours of a subject,' and are instead themselves subject to movement and evolution. As an example, she details how the figure of the 'asylum seeker' circulates within Western society (Ahmed 2004, 121). Similarly, the circulation of the madwoman as a figure 'produces a differentiation between "us" and "them," whereby "they" are constituted as the cause or the justification of "our" feeling of hate' (Ahmed 2004, 124). The madwoman

thus comes to circulate as a hateful, terrifying object, inducing affectual responses to a 'perceived injury' in which 'the other's [...] proximity is felt as the violence of negation against the body' (Ahmed 2004, 124). The body, in this instance, is the hermeneutic practices that philosophically ground Western perceptions of the self and the world. As 'a sign sticks to a body,' it 'constitute[es] [the body] as the object of fear,' simultaneously giving and receiving meaning from a signifier to inform affectual reactions (Ahmed 2004, 128). Importantly, certain subjects and objects are predisposed to becoming objects of fear and hate, as they are 'shaped by histories that "stick,"' thereby 'making some objects more than others seem fearsome' (Ahmed 2004, 128). Following a similar dynamic, fear and hatred circulate and then stick to a predisposed body, constituting it as fearful, dis/eased, and ill/ogical. At the same time, the body also constitutes the meaning of nonsense as indicative of a horrifying madness within the subject. In this concomitant relationship, affects such as horror, disgust, interest, and curiosity often 'stick' to nonsensically mad bodies.

If, as previously argued, the story's frame implicates the reader within the nonsensical narrative, then it seems fair to read Alice's responses as suggestive of hegemonic social ideologies and affects. These responses have demonstrated their power to remain naturalized and within the realm of 'common sense,' even in the modern day. For example, during the tea party with the Mad Hatter, the March Hare, and the Dormouse, the latter tells a story that 'confuse[s] poor Alice,' leading her to interrupt with a reasonable question: 'Why' (Carroll 1998, 66)? In response, the March Hare retorts, 'Why not' (Carroll 1998, 66)? However, when the Dormouse asks an unreasonable question during its story, Alice, 'very much confused,' begins saying, 'I don't think—' before the Hatter interrupts her and simply states, 'Then you shouldn't talk' (Carroll 1998, 67). Alice, upset with '[t]his piece of rudeness [...] got up in great disgust, and walked off' (Carroll 1998, 67). It is notable that Alice, when faced with nonsensical logics deployed by mad subjects, reads them as inappropriate, is 'disgust[ed],' and chooses to 'wal[k] off' rather than engage with alternative articulations of meaning. Her reactions to nonsense and madness are continuously reinforced by discursive conceptualizations of these phenomena; her responses to the constant disruption of hegemonic processes portray the ways in which nonsense and madness manifest as discursively predetermined articulations bound together in an affectual braid of abjection, curiosity, anxiety, and dis/ease.

We can include feminist conceptualizations of auto-theory to explore alternative hermeneutic practices for interpreting and reading nonsensical madness. These conceptualizations are not focused solely on signification, as psychoanalysis is wont to do. Instead, auto-theory is specifically interested in the *performative* and *temporal* aspects of meaning, as well as methodologies of world-building and manifestations of subjectivity. Auto-theory foundationally recognizes ‘reiterated speech acts’ as significant to subjectivity, a conceptualization of the self ‘with a well-established feminist genealogy’ (Bal 2013, 52; Fournier 2018, 644). From this grounding in performativity, auto-theory relies upon a poststructuralist ‘approach to the self or “I,”’ in which meaning follows a deferred logic (Fournier 2018, 645); however, in the conceptualization of meaning as both present and absent, there is a ‘fundamental inter-temporality’ assumed within this feminist framework (Bal 2013, 54). Mieke Bal perceives images as always ‘chang[ing] [...] with each act of viewing projected upon it, with time, place, and social circumstance of its subsequent “life” as a work of art,’ and therefore ‘[a]n image, in this sense, will always be in the process of “becoming”’ (2013, 54). Bal gives auto-theory an important theoretical twist, which notions about madness outside of feminist and cultural theory do not consider. It is in ‘[t]he habits of reiteration’ where ‘(slow) change’ is possible, and in this way, auto-theory ‘us[es] the body’s experience to develop knowledge’ (Bal 2013, 54; 52). Thus, when ‘reading’ madness and nonsense, the focus on performativity is an enactment of interpretation that centers meaning within an individual’s *praxis* of manifesting meaning.

Despite its strong theoretical roots, auto-theory is still relatively new to the field of aesthetics, and almost non-existent in hermeneutics; auto-theory is primarily regarded as a ‘methodological tool’ of artistic production (Bal 2013, 54). For example, Maggie Nelson’s *The Argonauts* (2015) is a work of auto-theoretical non-fiction that enmeshes cultural theory and philosophy in her existence as a queer woman; it includes quotes with citational references in the margins of her text. Her text is particularly relevant to our discussion, as *The Argonauts* takes up poststructuralist theories and ideas of language and hermeneutics:

Words change depending on who speaks them; there is no cure. The answer isn’t just to introduce new words (*boi*, *cisgendered*, *andro-fag*) and then set out to reify their meanings (though obviously there is power and pragmatism

here). One must also become alert to the multitude of possible uses, possible contexts, the wings with which each word can fly. (Nelson 2015, 8)

Nelson meditates on the special meanings she finds in her deployment of the word ‘husband,’ actively choosing to ‘le[t] an individual experience of desire take precedence over a categorical one’ (2015, 9). It is thus her repetitive performance of meaning that re-appropriates and re-signifies the word ‘husband.’ In her book, Nelson includes Judith Butler’s critique of readings of *Gender Trouble* (1990), indicating an attention to the multiplicity of potential meanings behind her use of the term ‘husband.’ Butler writes, ‘Performativity has to do with repetition, very often with the repetition of oppressive and painful gender norms to force them to resignify. This is not freedom, but a question of how to work the trap that one is inevitably in’. Butler here recognizes the power dynamics that Western interpretative structures build in their hierarchization of transcendental perception and signification. Crucially, though, the meaning ‘from within’ that is articulated yet always deferred is a characteristic of auto-theory that acknowledges the restrictions that Western logics place upon the potentiality of meaning (Bal 2013, 52). In the example of *The Argonauts*, Nelson instead offers a dialogic ‘relationship between [her narrative] and the intellectual reflection’ (Bal 2013, 52). Auto-theory thus embraces the paradoxical temporal nature of meaning that ‘must be grasped twice’ (Deleuze 1990, 5). This negation of binaric structures is also found in Deleuze. He outlines the way in which time is perceived as both ‘the living present in bodies which act and are acted upon,’ and ‘an entity infinitely divisible into past and future, and into the incorporeal effects which result from bodies’ (1990, 5). In distinguishing the incorporeal as merely an ‘effect,’ Deleuze suggests that the Stoics are able to arrive at the ‘incorporeal limit’ where ‘that which is most profound is the immediate,’ and ‘the immediate is found in language’ (1990, 7; 8–9). This assumption of profundity in self-present articulations therefore suggests that these performances of the self and the body are always already enmeshed in an ‘infinitely divisible’ temporal schema influenced by other performances and re-articulations that are simultaneously absent and present (Deleuze 1990, 5).

We see articulations of nonsense and madness as meaningful in their refusal of dualist logics. This chapter thus views auto-theory as a potentially fertile ground for producing meaning through a respectful reading-project, or at least a conceptualization of the interconnected workings of

nonsense and madness. The poststructuralist nature of auto-theoretical production recognizes a multiplicity of meanings in its perception of meaning as a performance and dialogue with the viewer/reader. Auto-theoretical reading is a dynamic method of hermeneutics that invites recognition of infinitely potential meaning behind articulations. Abandoning what Maurice Merleau-Ponty terms 'originary faith' that 'the world is what we see' and jumping down the rabbit hole is predicated upon an acknowledgment (quoted in Ricoeur 2005, 65; Merleau-Ponty 1968, 3):

[I]f we can lose our reference marks *unbeknown to ourselves* we are never sure of *having* them when we think we have them; if we can withdraw from the world of perception without knowing it, [into a dream or into madness,] nothing proves to us that we are ever in it, nor that the observable is ever entirely observable, nor that it is made of another fabric than the dream. (Merleau-Ponty 1968, 6)

This self-present challenge to hegemonic conceptualizations of perception locates meaning in performances, (re)articulations, or manifestations of subjectivity, thereby restoring agency to mad people who have been systematically denied along with others who have experienced the brutal revoking of their subjectivity throughout time.

We have briefly investigated the ways in which Western hermeneutic philosophies read and interpret nonsense and madness to produce the two phenomena as concurrently meaningless according to Western dualist structures of logic. We perceive the prioritization of subjective manifestations of (re)articulated meaning as a practice of embodied reading, a *praxis* that fosters the potentiality of significance. In this way, madness and nonsense are respectively regarded as potential producers and bearers of important meanings and knowledges that have been and still continue to be systematically compromised.

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